

SPEECHES

OF THE RIGHT HON.

W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

&

WITH

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

EDITED BY

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MR. GLADSTONE.

THREE years ago Mr. Gladstone celebrated the jubilee of his labours in the public service, and but yesterday he was in Midlothian engaged with all the fervour of a young candidate in promoting his own election and the triumph of the principles of which he is the representative. Born on the 29th of December, 1809, he distinguished himself both at Eton and Oxford, taking a double first-class at the University, which he quitted in 1831. After the fashion of the day, he proceeded from College to make the grand tour, and was in Italy when the summons came, in obedience to which he placed his foot on the first rung of the ladder of his fame. It was the Duke of Newcastle, registered owner of the borough of Newark, who was immediately instrumental in bringing Mr. Gladstone into the House of Commons. He issued his Address to the Electors on the 9th of October, 1831, and it is curious to find in it a promise on the part of the young Tory candidate to do his best to secure the allotment of small holdings for the agricultural labourer. His maiden speech in the House of Commons was delivered in defence of the domestic institution of slavery, a burning question at the time he entered Parliament. Mr. Gladstone was then, as he is described in a famous sentence by Lord Macaulay, "A young man of unblemished character and of distinguished parliamentary talents, the rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories who follow reluctantly and mutinously a leader whose experience and eloquence are indispensable to them, but whose cautious temper and moderate opinions they abhor."

There was nothing either of caution or reluctance in Mr. Gladstone's attachment to Sir Robert Peel. To this day he can hardly mention the name of his early leader without signs of emotion. It was in the last days of 1834 that Sir Robert Peel, undertaking to form a Ministry in succession to that of Lord Melbourne,

offered Mr. Gladstone the post of Junior Lord of the Treasury. Within six months he was promoted to the office of Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and, just fifty years in advance of Mr. Chamberlain, brought in a Bill dealing with the question of safety of life at sea. It is a fact little known, I believe, that at one time Mr. Gladstone contemplated a career at the Bar. His name appears on the books of Lincoln's Inn from 1833 to 1839, in which last year he petitioned to have it removed, alleging as the ground for the request that he had given up all intention of being called to the Bar.

The Peel Administration of 1834 did not live beyond the spring of 1835, and for the next five or six years Mr. Gladstone remained in Opposition with his chief. But, though out of office, he was not idle. He spoke frequently in debate, and the growth of his position in popular opinion is testified to by the fact that in 1839, being in his twenty-eighth year, he was invited to stand as the Tory candidate for Manchester. In 1841 Sir Robert Peel was back in power, and Mr. Gladstone, returned again as member for Newark—this time as a colleague of Lord John Manners—undertook two offices, the Mastership of the Mint and the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade. He was of great assistance to Sir Robert Peel in the revision of the tariff which preceded the abolition of the Corn Duties. In 1843 he became President of the Board of Trade, and two years later resigned his office, not being in agreement with the Government in the matter of a Bill introduced by them dealing with Maynooth College. But he was not a man whom Sir Robert Peel could long spare from his side. Early in the next year he returned to the Ministry as Secretary of State for the Colonies, and, what was more important, pledged to go the full length of Sir Robert Peel's Free Trade policy, which now reached the point of the abolition of the Corn Laws. This progress necessitated the resignation of his seat for Newark, and for the whole of the session of 1846, and during the greater part of the next, he remained without a seat. When he returned as member for Oxford University the Corn Law Repeal Act had been added to the Statute Book, Sir Robert Peel was relegated to the Opposition benches, and the Whigs came in for a lease of power.

In 1853, in the Ministry of Lord Aberdeen, he found his true place. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer, and on the 18th of April in this year he delivered the first of what has proved to be a long series of Budget speeches unsurpassed in Parliamentary history. Early in 1859 the brief administration of Lord Derby, in which Mr. Disraeli had for the second time held the office of

Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to an end, and Mr. Gladstone joined the Ministry formed by Lord Palmerston, which lasted as long as the Premier's life.

The year 1865 was an important epoch in Mr. Gladstone's history. Offering himself for re-election at Oxford, he was rejected in favour of Mr. Gathorne Hardy. From the University he hastened to the manufacturing town, and stood before the men of Manchester, as he said, "unmuzzled." The unmuzzling process was completed by an occurrence which took place in the autumn of 1865. Lord Palmerston died, and the pent-up flood of Liberal life rushed downward like a cataract. The time for coalitions and temporising was passed. Earl Russell succeeded as Premier, and Mr. Gladstone was named Leader of the House of Commons, still holding the ministerial office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was felt that the hour had come for the introduction of a Reform Bill; and in Earl Russell the man was naturally found. Of course the statesman who had taken a leading part in the Reform campaign of 1832, was largely responsible for the measure of 1866. But it happened that to Mr. Gladstone, as Leader of the House of Commons, fell the task of introducing the Bill, and bearing the brunt of the battle which raged around it. There were giants in those days; and the Parliamentary debates of the session of 1866 unmistakably stand out in the pages of *Hansard*, by reason of their brilliancy and fire. Mr. Disraeli led the united body of the Conservatives in an attack upon a Bill which they regarded with holy horror, as a long advance on the way to the establishment of a democracy. But the most dangerous foes of the Liberal party were to be found within its own household. This was the year in which Mr. Lowe, fresh from the insufficient glories of a Colonial Legislature, made his mark in the House of Commons. The terror of the uttermost Tory was far exceeded by the apprehension with which he regarded this Bill. Speaking of Mr. Gladstone, and contemplating the probability of the Bill being carried, he exclaimed, "I court not a single leaf of the laurels that may encircle his brow. I do not envy him his triumph. His be the glory of carrying the Bill—mine of having to the utmost of my poor ability resisted it."

It was in this year that the Cave of Adullam was formed, and there was created that immortal "party of two (Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe), like the Scotch terrier that was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which the tail." The debate on the second reading of the Bill lasted for several days. On the eve of the division it fell to Mr. Gladstone's lot to wind up the debate, which he did in a speech containing perhaps

absolutely the finest peroration of the many which sparkle in the train of the infinitude of his orations. "You cannot fight against the future," he said, turning sharply upon the Opposition, and speaking in a voice where pathos struggled with exultation for the mastery. "Time is on our side. The great social forces which move onward in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb—those great social forces are against you. They are marshalled on our side; and the banner which we now carry in this fight, though perhaps at the moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the height of Heaven, and will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and a not far distant victory."

In the meantime the defeat too surely foreseen was accomplished. The Adullamites condescending with the Conservatives made it impossible to pass the measure, which was finally thrown out. The Ministry resigned, and the Earl of Derby, most unhappy of Cabinet constructors, was again called upon to form a Ministry from a party in a hopeless minority.

In 1868, as the result of the General Election, Mr. Gladstone was invested with supreme power, and received from the constituencies the mandate to disestablish the Irish Church. In this Parliament, beginning its labours in February, 1869, an enormous amount of work was done under the personal direction of Mr. Gladstone. The Irish Church was disestablished, the Irish land freed, the Education Act passed, Purchase abolished, and the Ballot established. In 1874 the energy of the Liberal majority had burned itself out, and upon an appeal to the country the Conservatives were returned to power, Mr. Disraeli meeting Parliament in almost exactly the same position as Mr. Gladstone had filled when the new Parliament gathered in 1869. What followed on this—Mr. Gladstone's withdrawal from public life, his awakening at the time of the Bulgarian atrocities, his first campaign in Midlothian, his triumphant return, and the great works accomplished in the Parliament but just dead, are fresh memories, that need not here be revived.

More than forty years ago there was published a little book entitled the "British Senate in 1838." It is full of those personal descriptions of eminent men in their public capacity which, written in our own time, we very properly reprobate, but for which historians and biographers, writing many years after, are exceedingly grateful. The anonymous writer has preserved for us a picture of the eloquent young man which is rare and interesting. "Mr.

Gladstone's appearance and manners," he says, "are much in his favour. He is a fine-looking man. He is about the usual height, and of good figure. His countenance is mild and pleasant, and has a highly intellectual expression. His eyes are clear and quick; his eyebrows are dark and rather prominent. There is not a dandy in the House but envies what Truefitt would call his 'fine head of jet-black hair.' It is always carefully parted from the crown downward to the brow, where it is tastefully shaded; his features are small and regular, and his complexion must be a very unworthy witness if he does not possess an abundant stock of health. Mr. Gladstone's gesture is varied but not violent. When he rises he generally puts both his hands behind his back; and having there suffered them to embrace each other for a short time, he unclasps them, and allows them to drop on either side. They are not permitted to remain long in the locality before you see them again closed together, and hanging down before him. Their reunion is not suffered to last for any length of time. Again a separation takes place, and now the right hand is seen moving up and down before him. Having thus exercised it a little, he thrusts it into the pocket of his coat, and then orders the left hand to follow its example. Having granted them a momentary repose there, they are again put into motion; and in a few seconds they are seen reposing *vis-à-vis* on his breast. He moves his face and body from one direction to another, not forgetting to bestow a liberal share of attention on his own party. He is always listened to with much attention by the House, and appears to be highly respected by men of all parties. He is a man of good business habits: of this he furnished abundant proof when Under-Secretary for the Colonies during the short-lived administration of Sir Robert Peel."

It is curious to note that some of these mannerisms of forty years ago are preserved by the great statesman we know to-day. It is particularly notable that to this day, when Mr. Gladstone rises and begins what is intended to be a great oration, he has a tendency to clasp his hands behind his back. This attitude, however, like the subdued mood of which it is an indication, prevails only during the opening sentences. Age has rather fired than dulled his oratorical energy. He has even, during the existence of the present Parliament, increased in rapidity of gesture almost to the point of fury. The jet black hair of fifty years ago has faded and fallen, leaving only a few thin wisps of grey carefully disposed over the grandly-formed head with which, as he once told a Scotch deputation, London hatters have had such trouble. The rounded cheeks are sunken, and their bloom

has given place to yellow; the full brow is wrinkled; the dark eyes, bright and flashing still, are underset with innumerable wrinkles; the "good figure" is somewhat rounded at the shoulders; and the sprightly step is growing deliberate. But the intellectual fire of fifty years ago is rather quickened than quenched, and the promise of health has been abundantly fulfilled in a maintenance of physical strength and activity that seems phenomenal. Mr. Gladstone will outsit the youngest member of the House if the issue at stake claims his role in the pending division. Up to the period when his voice failed he could speak for three hours at a stretch, and he put in the three hours as much mental and physical energy as, judiciously distributed, would suffice for the whole debate.

By comparison he is far more emphatic in gesture when addressing the House of Commons than when standing before a public meeting. This, doubtless, is explicable by the fact that while in the one case he is free from contradiction, in the other he is, more particularly during a period of Tory ascendancy, outrageously subject to it. Trembling through every nerve with intensity of conviction and the wrath of battle, he almost literally smites his opponent hip and thigh. Taking the brass-bound box upon the table as representing "the right hon. gentleman" or "the noble lord" opposite, he will beat it violently with his right hand, creating a resounding noise that sometimes makes it difficult to catch the words he desires to emphasise. Or, standing with heels closely pressed together and feet spread out fanwise, so that he may turn as on a pivot to watch the effect of his speech on either side of the House, he will assume that the palm of his left hand is the adversary of the moment, and straightway he beats upon it with his right hand with a ferocity that causes to curdle the blood of the occupants of the Ladies' Gallery. At this stage will be noted the most marked retention of early House of Commons habit, in the way in which the orator continually turns round to address his own followers, to the outraging of a fundamental point of etiquette which requires that all speech should be directed to the Chair.

These are personal peculiarities which have an interest of their own as accompanying outbursts of eloquence the fame of which fills the world.

HENRY W. LUCY.

LONDON, Nov. 1885.

SPEECHES

OF THE RIGHT HON.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, M.P.

THE SECOND READING OF THE IRISH LAND BILL.

(IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 16, 1881.)

Sir, I desire to apologize to the House for my having requested my hon. and learned friend the Solicitor-General for Ireland (Mr. W. M. Johnson) to permit me, instead of himself, to address it at this early portion of the evening—though not quite so early as I hoped it would have been. Various observations have been made by hon. members, who appear to think there has been either a purpose or unnecessary reservation on the part of the Government with respect to some questions of interest raised in the Land Law (Ireland) Bill; and I have made up my own mind that it is well for me—though I do not see the justice of the objection—to do all that lies in my power to obviate its repetition. I have, therefore, determined to take advantage of the opportunity secured by my hon. and learned friend, and to solicit the privilege of addressing the House to-night; and being somewhat indisposed, and not able to remain in the House throughout the evening, to venture to make a change in the arrangement as to the person by whom the debate is to be resumed.

“CONFISCATION.”

Now, sir, before I speak on the Bill, with the second reading of which we are concerned, I wish to refer to two words which we have heard often repeated in this debate. The first word is “confiscation,” and the second word is “compensation.” They are words that are, and ought to be, in close association together; for I certainly should be very slow to deny that where confiscation could be proved compensation ought to follow. But, sir, I must say that those words are used too frequently and too soon. They are almost the stock expressions of debate upon certain classes of questions. They have repeatedly, again and again

been urged with the greatest confidence where, in some cases, no proof has been shown, and where in other cases disproof has been furnished abundantly. I will not refer now in detail to the charges that were made upon the very limited measure that we introduced last year with respect to Compensation for Disturbance, because that remains as it was twelve months ago—a matter of opinion—having been nipped in the bud, and having been prevented from doing the extended evil which was anticipated from it by hon. gentlemen opposite, or the great good which we, on our part, confidently believed that it would have produced. Hon. gentlemen opposite know—I need hardly remind them—how this charge of confiscation was raised on the repeal of the Corn Laws; and how it was raised last year upon the very humble, though useful, measure introduced by my right hon. and learned friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect to Ground Game. It is more to the purpose that I should remind them how freely it was raised when the Land Bill was under discussion in 1870. It was used on that occasion by the hon. gentleman the Member for Mid Lincolnshire (Mr. Chaplin); but I had not intended to quote him in regard to it had he not invited me by his cheer. It was, however, used by others, who may be considered as representative men of the party. Lord Salisbury described that Bill as bribing one class by plundering another. He said: “You are bribing one class and plundering another, and you are setting an example easily followed.” Lord Cairns used much the same language. He spoke candidly, and said: “You allow me the option of purchasing my own property,” words which themselves imply confiscation. Indeed, he quoted with praise a declaration from a certain publication, that there would be no settlement of the question without something which would be called confiscation. Well, I am very glad that I am not mis-stating anything as regards the case. “Confiscation” was the word applied to the leading enactments of the Land Bill of 1870. Did the Land Act, when it became the law of the land, confiscate the property of the landlords? Did it injure the property of the landlords? We affirm, on the contrary, and upon evidence, that it improved the property of the landlords. *A shake of the head is less authoritative* than the returns made of authentic transactions in Courts of Justice, and authentic transactions in an Irish Court of Justice from year to year show us two things. In the first place, the rents have increased under the action of the Land Act. I am not speaking now of undue increase; I would say rents have grown under the action of the Land Act. And, in the second place, upon the increased rents, with the larger rental, a larger number of years’ purchase has been obtained where the property has come into the market. And that, sir, has been the end of the charge of confiscation with respect to the Land Act.

But I humbly think there have been cases much more like confiscation than the Land Act. I find a case in my own experience in 1874, though it was on a more limited scale. I refer to the confiscation of the advowsons in Scotland under the Church Patronage Act. I mentioned it at the time, and I never knew a clearer case in my life. But that is a small matter. Confiscation has come nearer to Ireland in previous legislation. When, in a country where it is now admitted that the

improvements upon the holdings are, as a rule, the work of the tenants, we allowed and encouraged the landlord to carry those improvements into the market and to sell them for his own benefit—then, indeed, there was something like confiscation. I never heard, sir, on that occasion that the Members for the University of Dublin or anyone else belonging to their party were scandalized at the proceedings of Parliament. It was a most unfortunate and deplorable business. I do not say, and I do not believe, that those who made the recommendations which led to it—the Members of the Devon Commission—were actuated by any evil motive. I believe it was a sheer error, arising out of a heedless want of regard for existing facts. But I want to point it out as teaching a lesson of caution and circumspection to those who so freely and so readily use these hard words and cast them at the heads of men who also consider that to propose principles of confiscation would be a disgrace—a disgrace to the Ministers who suggested and the Parliament which would tolerate them for a moment.

I own that I go myself further than what I have stated with regard to the Encumbered Estates Act. By it we have established a system in Ireland, during the present century, which essentially altered the position of the Irish tenant without his permission—I may say without his knowledge. The old system of the Irish law made it hardly practicable for a landlord, without the greatest delay and difficulty, to put into force extreme measures against the tenant. I do not make that statement upon feeble or doubtful authority. I make it on the statement of a preamble of an Act which altered that state of things. The Act of 1816, which did this, recited in its preamble that such were the expenses and delays of ejectment that it was entirely and absolutely impracticable as a remedy. We must not, therefore, refuse to look at the fact that if the recital of that preamble be true, there was a permanence and security of tenure then attaching to the Irish tenant which you have since taken away. He has never acquiesced in that abstraction of the security which he possessed and enjoyed; he has maintained against it a continual protest; he has certainly not allowed it to lapse into abeyance. What I wish to say is that we are endeavouring, and it is time to endeavour, to establish the order of something like equal justice in Ireland in these matters; and that those who plead on behalf of landlords—and they have a perfect right to plead against anything that they think trespasses on those rights—should recollect what is due to others who have so long suffered from a course of legislation continued through generation after generation, endured too long without complaint, and now resulting in difficulties with which we are endeavouring to cope, and in the endeavour to cope with which I think we are entitled to some consideration on the part of this House.

NO CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION.

Now, first, with regard to the charges of confiscation. I will only say that the Government cannot admit that they make any confiscation, or in any way approach confiscation, in this Bill, and are not prepared in consequence to admit any plea for compensation. The proof of confiscation—the proof of damage resulting from the action of the Legislature—is the

very first step that must be taken, and that must be established beyond doubt before the House can fairly be called upon to consider whether it will grant compensation or not. In 1846 the Irish landlord was not inconsiderably compensated at the time of the repeal of the Corn Laws, notwithstanding the enormous benefits conferred upon him by Sir Robert Peel in that measure. There was not a single commodity reared in Ireland for export that has not increased in price under the action of Free Trade, and yet for the change that brought about those results the Irish landlords were compensated by the transfer of a moiety of the charge for the Constabulary to the Consolidated Fund, a moiety which then, I think, amounted to £300,000 or £400,000, but now amounts to more than £1,000,000. I will now pass from the question of confiscation and compensation, and come to the Bill.

Now I wish to observe, sir, that I have never known a case of so large a measure debated for such a length of time of which so few points have been brought into serious discussion. The points that have been brought into serious discussion, in very different degrees, are, as far as I know, these. We have heard much of fair rents, and we have had reference to the question of arrears. On the question of arrears I will say nothing, except that it is an important question; but there will be no advantage, indeed there would be a difficulty, in dealing with it in detail on the second reading of the Bill. In the same way, another bye-question which we have considered, and the result of which consideration appears in the Bill—but it may be worthy, notwithstanding, of further consideration—is the question of current leases. That also is evidently a question which, in my opinion, ought to be reserved for the Committee on the Bill. Another question, sir, that has been repeatedly raised has been the apparent unfairness and hardship of refusing to the landlords, as it is said, the power to go into the Court. That is certainly an obvious and plausible question. If you permit the tenant to come into your Court, why do you not permit the landlord? That question seems to have caused much difficulty, and one hon. and learned gentleman, the Member for Antrim (Mr. Macnaghten), was so struck with the force of the question that he said he should propose that the landlord should be permitted to go into Court. But how did the hon. and learned Member propose to do so? His speech was characterised by great critical and logical power. But he proposed to give an experimental proof of his constructive powers, and that was a much more dangerous task. He said it was a hard case that a landlord having 150 tenants should be liable to 150 suits. What he proposes is this: "I will let the landlord go into Court and exhibit to the Court the state of his rents, and get from the Court a certificate that his rents are fair. But the landlord must undertake not to raise his rents for a certain number of years." Did the hon. and learned gentleman, who is a lawyer, propose that that proceeding should take place behind the back of the tenant? That is the answer I get. I am glad to find that the hon. and learned gentleman, when under criticism, is not insensible to comment. He meant then that there must be notice to the tenant. Very good. The consequence is that the hon. and learned gentleman proposes, by way of giving favour to the landlord, that he shall have 150 suits on at the same time, in order

that he may be rewarded by the privilege of having the rent established, which rent he must not raise for a certain number of years. I cannot conceive that the hon. and learned gentleman was serious in making such a proposal as that the landlord should be allowed to come as a privilege into Court and raise the question of increasing every rent on his estate.

THE AIM OF THE BILL.

But, sir, we have proceeded on an entirely opposite principle—the principle of disturbing nothing that we could avoid disturbing, and of leaving outside the Court and the action of the Court all those who are willing to be so left, in order that they may settle their affairs without the intervention of the Court. That is the aim of the Bill. The Bill does not force the Court upon the whole agricultural tenantry of Ireland; it leaves the initiative of going before the Court to the tenant. But still that is not an answer to the question, Why not allow the landlord to go into Court? In the first place you are entirely mistaken in the idea that the landlord has no power to go into Court. That is a mistake made by many hon. gentlemen who have made eloquent speeches on the other side of the House, evidently without having read beyond the first page of the Bill. Now, sir, what is the interest of the landlord in this matter? His interest, in the first place, lies in keeping up his rent to a fair and just standard. That interest is secured to him by giving him the power of raising his rent, and throwing it upon the tenant to go into Court in order to obtain a judicial rent against him. Some people say: “Why don’t you allow the landlord to escape the odium of raising of rent by obtaining a judicial sentence from the Court?” They think—it is the first time I ever heard it—that any landlord in this country believes that he is diminishing the odium of some proceeding that he takes against a tenant in his own interest by founding upon it a lawsuit in which he involves the tenant. The fact is that so far from diminishing odium, he would, in my opinion, largely increase it, when he mingles the action of the Court with his own pressure upon the tenant.

THE LANDLORD’S INTEREST SECURED.

Then, again, there is the interest of the landlord if he wishes to avoid the risk of having a tenant rack-rented, not only in his own rent, but in the tenant-right for which he pays to the out-going tenant. The landlord may fairly plead—at any rate, the Bill admits it—that the tenant-right may rack-rent the incoming tenant as much as an extravagant rent. Be it right or wrong, we have provided in the Bill for that, and all that we have heard of successive sales of tenant-right—rising one above another—is utterly inapplicable to the Bill. The first clause of the Bill provides for it. Hon. gentlemen who have spoken on this subject have only read the first limb of the first sentence of the first clause. It says that the tenant shall be allowed to sell his tenant-right for the best price that he can obtain. Hon. gentlemen read so far, and no farther. But if they went on, they would find that the tenant is required to give notice to the landlord, and the landlord, on receiving

that notice, may agree with the tenant on the amount of the tenant-right that the outgoing man is to receive ; and, if he cannot agree with the tenant, he may take him into the Court for the purpose. Thus the two items of the landlord's interest are secured—his interest as to the rent, by his power of raising the rent ; his interest as to the tenant-right, by his power of taking the tenant into Court. But it may be said, " Why don't you give him a wider power still, and allow him always to go into Court ? " That is a fair question for discussion, and we have well considered it. But I think the House will probably agree in our conclusion that the wiser course is that which we have adopted. In the strange state of things which has prevailed in Ireland the Court has been looked upon as a sort of Paradise into which everybody would rush. That is not our view at all in the matter. We conceive that the action of the Court must impose considerable burdens on small owners who cannot undertake to pay the expenses of civil litigation ; and the expenses of civil litigation, however you may control them, must be severely felt by the poor man and the small man. To the landlord the expenses frequently may be light ; to the tenant they may be very severe. But, be it understood, it is in the indiscriminate power of the landlord to go into Court. Let that matter be argued in Committee if there is any question about it. We shall hear what is to be said, with perfect willingness to be convinced if good and sufficient reasons can be given ; but we have not acted without reason or consideration in the course we have taken. I have shown also that it is totally inaccurate to say that the landlord has no power of going into Court, because, in the matter of tenant-right, which he can check in no other way, this Bill authorizes him to go into the Court. In the 3rd sub-section of the 1st clause it is stated that, on receiving notice, the landlord may purchase the tenancy for such amount as may be agreed upon, or, in the event of disagreement, as may be settled by the Court. The resort to the Court is there as clearly indicated as can be. [Sir R. ASSHETON Cross : When is that power given ?] When there is a change of tenancy. The 1st clause says :—

" On receiving such notice the landlord may purchase the tenancy for such sum as may be agreed upon, or, in the event of disagreement, may be settled by the Court to be the value thereof."

That contemplates most distinctly the case when the tenancy passes from one person to another ; but I do not believe the words convey that it is to be a resumption of the land by permanent possession on the part of the landlord. The landlord may agree with the tenant upon the sum to be paid for the purchase, or he may have the sum fixed by the Court.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COURT.

And now I will take the question of the constitution of the Court. I own this matter has received from one of the Members for the University of Dublin such discussion in detail as I have hardly ever known given upon the second reading of a Bill, and with a warmth and vehemence such as I have scarcely ever seen exceeded even by him.

This is a matter necessarily of detail, for consideration and adjustment. I am bound, however, to make an admission in passing. In one point this Bill, for which, I think, the draftsman cannot be too much praised, whatever judgment its authors may deserve, does not exactly correspond with our intention. Our intention was to give an option of passing by the Civil Bill Court, if it was decided so to act; but it was also thought there should be power of going into the Civil Bill Court. The tenant, we thought, should have the power, if he pleased, of going to the Commission, or the agent of the Commission at once. I put it respectfully to hon. gentlemen, whether it is desirable to go further than that? I am not now raising the question of the arrangements to be made for the conduct of proceedings in the Civil Bill Courts; but I submit it would not have been wise wholly to pass by a body of gentlemen who have had an opportunity under the Land Act of acquiring a mass of experience such as is not possessed by any other body of gentlemen in Ireland. I will go one step further, and say I cannot for myself—it may be owing to my ignorance—think, upon the figures, that the result of actions in the Civil Bill Court has been very discreditable. Hon. gentlemen who are lawyers will be able to form a much better judgment than I can in this matter; but I invite attention to these facts. For the four years previous to 1877—before that time we have no available account—we have the number of land claims which were entered before the Court. These claims were 1,688. The appeals tried from these cases were 212. The judgments confirmed were 140, and, so far as I can make out from the figures, there were 50 judgments which have been reversed, upon a total of 1,688 cases tried—that is to say, 3 per cent., which means that 32 out of every 33 men who came before the Civil Bill Court had justice done to them. I cannot suppose that will be considered a very unsatisfactory result. I can hardly think the Court deserves the severity of judgment which has been pronounced by some. Great fault is found with the Bill because of what it is said may be done by our Commissioner or by his deputy, and the most dreadful pictures have been painted of the consequences of placing powers in the hands of incompetent men. We shall be very glad to hear in Committee of any safeguards that can be provided; but the House will bear in mind this fact. It is hardly possible to forecast the details of the probable transactions under this Bill. No one can tell where they will rise—how they will rise—in what part of the country they will rise.

This leads me to another remark on the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Antrim. He complained that the Bill was not sufficiently elastic. How does he propose to make it more elastic in this matter of the Court? He said: "Why do you not appoint two Commissioners for each Province?" How do we know what will be requisite for each Province? In one Province there may be little or no demand. In Leinster and Ulster, for example, it is possible the demand will be very different from what it will be in the other Provinces. What we propose is, not that a multitude of public officers should be created before we know whether there shall be any duties for them to perform; but that officers of the Court may be appointed as necessity arises and according to the measure of the necessity. So much for

certain of the points raised; and as to the very important point of a fair rent, one of the Members for the University of Dublin condemns our proposal as undoubted confiscation tempered and flavoured with cowardice; while other hon. gentlemen, more moderate in their mode of looking at the measure, think that the words we have used are defective, and even dangerous. I see the senior Member for the University (Mr. Plunket) in his place, and I must pay him a deserved compliment. I do not think it was possible to submit arguments more calmly, clearly, or more fairly to the consideration of the House than he did.

Let me endeavour to go through the points of this question, and in doing so, I shall make another more agreeable reference to the hon. and learned Member for Antrim. He made a remark with which I, for one, most cordially agree. He said the very terms "fair rent" conveyed their own meaning. They are really the charter of those who are interested in fair rents; but it is a question, and a very difficult question, to know how far we can go in development, in restriction, and in direction. I have to admit, however, that the Government are not very proud of their workmanship in this portion of their undertaking, and I hope it may be amended, and materially amended, in Committee. But, at the present moment, my wish is to draw in the clearest manner a distinction between that which is essential and that which is secondary and accidental in this clause. And here I must complain of the right hon. and learned gentleman the late Attorney-General for Ireland (Mr. Gibson). He holds that, according to the best legal construction, the proceedings of the Court would be carried on thus: a certain rent would be fixed, and then a tenant-right outside Ulster equivalent to seven years' rent will be deducted from that original rent. Now we protest altogether against that method of deduction; it is not the manner, so far as I know, in which these things are conducted in Ireland now. In this very difficult business it is some comfort to recollect that this subject of rents is not new to Irish lawyers and Irish Judges; in Ulster it has been before them for some time; and in other parts of Ireland it has come before them in cases of eviction under the operation of the Land Act. I must go a little further and complain that the right hon. and learned gentleman not only put a construction upon the clause by interpolating words of his own into it that are not there; but he then went on to exhibit his own method in a supposed case, stating his argument on an altogether fallacious basis. He imagined a case in which he supposed the fair rent in the market was £24. The fair rent in the market! That was his starting-point in this great argument; but that starting-point is poisoned with a fallacy from the beginning. Our whole contention is, that these words, applied to Ireland generally—"a fair rent in the market"—are words involving a contradiction in terms, for the rent in the market is not a fair rent. Consequently, everything that the right hon. and learned gentleman founded upon that fallacious assumption was as fallacious as the assumption from which he started. The essence of this clause really must be considered apart from particular words which one person or another may desire to add to the description of that essence. I believe we were right in requiring that

the Court shall hear and take into consideration all the circumstances of the case. Beyond that, what we feel is this : there is one circumstance of the case so important, so paramount for every settlement of the question, that we must take notice of it, and that is the tenant's interest. We cannot leave that covered up by any general expression of "all the circumstances of the case." We are bound to point to the tenant's interest. Now no one can say, I think, that there has been any reticence on the part of the Government as to what the interest of the tenant is. My right hon. and learned friend the Attorney-General for Ireland said most truly that if you were to admit this doctrine of deduction it would be a deduction from the top-market rent, and not from the fair rent. Now, supposing the case of a top-market rent in Ireland, what does that include as a general rule ? In the first place, it includes annual payment for the value of the tenant's improvements, and that is the first and the greatest element of legitimate tenant-right. In the second place, it includes the excess which is found in open biddings for holdings in Ireland in consequence of the scarcity of land as compared with the demand for it. Just as in buying a curiosity in this country, the buyer will go far beyond the intrinsic value in the price he gives, simply because the article is rare, so, under the necessity of a much sterner order in Ireland, in bidding for land the bidder is ready to give more than he really ought to give, or can properly afford to give. And that excess in bidding for the land, owing to the scarcity of land in Ireland, is the second and remaining element of tenant-right.

And here I come to the very fair and pertinent question of the senior Member for the University of Dublin (Mr. Plunket). I say that neither of these elements of value belongs to the landlord. Both of them form constituent parts of the tenant-right, and those taken together may be said very fairly, in general terms, to constitute that which the tenant has to sell. Now it has been supposed to be absurd to make any reference in this matter to the compensation for disturbance and for improvements under the Land Act, and I admit, as the clause now stands, the words have too exclusive prominence given to them. They stand as if they were the only thing to be looked at outside Ulster, at all events, as requiring definite notice, whereas they are not. But, on the other hand, gentlemen must recollect that these words are most important and operative words under the Land Act of 1870. Under that Act as it passed this House and went to the House of Lords, it stood thus—that no yearly tenant could be evicted from his holding without being compensated for his improvements and for disturbance, on a scale with a maximum of seven years. Well, the effect of that was that the Act, as it went from this House, permitted assignment, and that assignment constituted tenant-right. I challenge contradiction to that statement. The place of a man whose holding was the means of livelihood was a thing worth paying for, and the people are willing to pay for it. The complaint is that they pay too much, and when we said to the holders of land—"We will fortify your position by taking care that you shall not be removed from it," we gave them virtually the tenant-right, and a real interest in the holding. But what was done in the House of Lords ? A prohibition to assign. Although, however, the property was made in-

alienable, though the privilege of alienation was unfortunately taken away, yet the property itself remains; and upon cases of eviction how is the thing worked? I am not now speaking of eviction for non-payment of rent, but of those cases—happily, I believe, not very numerous—where the eviction has been of a more arbitrary kind. In those cases what happens is this: The landlord has evicted, the tenant claimed compensation for disturbance, the landlord looked out for another tenant; that other tenant, and not the landlord, has paid to the outgoing man the compensation for disturbance; and that is the basis of the tenant-right. Depend upon it, under the operation of the Land Act there have been at work causes which, gradually but surely, have tended to the distinct development of a system of tenant-right in all agricultural holdings of Ireland; and not only so, but have tended to give to that tenant-right a form corresponding in the main to the compensation for disturbance and compensation for improvements.

I have explained, therefore, what the tenant has to transfer. I say he has to transfer these improvements; and if he is in a position fortified by compensation for disturbance, his holding being a means of livelihood, which it is worth another man's while to pay for, he has got this apart from the landlord; and it is perfectly fair and just that you should not interpose any obstacle. Therefore, in our view, the tenant-right in Ireland is made up of elements neither of which belongs to the landlord, and which no landlord except an unjust landlord—and the case I trust is exceptional—endeavours to convert to his own profit. But an unjust landlord must be prepared to be interfered with. We will not undertake to respect the use he has made of the peculiar circumstances of the country and of the long and favourable presumptions of the Legislature towards him, or allow his doing less than justice to those who stand towards him in the relation of social inferiors and dependants.

I trust, then, it will be understood that, in considering tenant-right, these, and these only, are the elements which, so far as our views go, the Court will be entitled to exact. We assert distinctly and maintain that such is the legitimate basis of tenant-right over and above improvements; but we assert also that that is an element which forms no part whatever of a landlord's legitimate rent, which consequently is not to be deducted from the rent, and constitutes no interference with it at all. I will not enter into further detail on this question. We shall have other opportunities of doing so.

THE TRULY WISE LANDLORD.

The principles of this Bill I have never heard once described in any speech from the opposite side of the House during this debate. Every observation that has been made has gone, as it has appeared to me, upon bye-points—for I call just and fair rent, however vital it may be, a bye-point. If we admit fair rent, you will, I hope, hold us bound to give a substantial meaning to those words; but it is a bye-point. I have, however, heard the principles of the Bill excellently described by those gentlemen who have studied the Bill on this side of the House. My hon. friend the Member for Tyrone (Mr. Lytton) perfectly comprehended it.

The basis of it lies in the land-scarcity of Ireland, and its principle is this—in the first place, a frank acceptance of the Irish custom, and especially this custom of tenant-right. And now I am going to make an observation—not dogmatically; but I must say that, in my reading about land in Ireland, it has often occurred to me that the truly wise landlord in Ireland was the man who not only was liberal to his tenants, but who gave to that liberality a form and method of application adapted to the usages of the country. I do firmly believe that there are many wise, good, and enlightened landlords in Ireland, using those words in the general sense, who have freely spent money and parted with money for the sake of what they thought doing their duty, but who would have done their duty more profitably for themselves, and more advantageously to the country, if they had been less intent upon importing exotic habits into the country, and more inclined to allow the people to work according to their usages and traditions. At any rate, I hope hon. gentlemen will see from our point of view that nothing is so plain as the duty of accepting the principle of tenant-right. I cannot say with what satisfaction I listened to the able speech of my noble friend the Member for Barnstaple (Viscount Lymington) upon this subject. His father, Lord Portsmouth, is one of those who tell you plainly, as I understand him, that he does not come before you in the character of a martyr or a victim. He does not say he has suffered by his practice to his tenants; but he has said that the frank allowance of tenant-right has been most profitable to himself. That has been the result of universal experience in Ireland, and it is established by the experience of Ulster. Whatever you may say of the extensive and almost unintelligible prices which are sometimes obtained there for tenant-right, it is undeniable that whereas, in general, rents in Ireland have grown much more slowly than in England or Scotland, the slowness of their growth is really to be attributed to the insecurity of the tenant. Equally undeniable is it that within Ireland itself, if you compare the growth in Ulster, where there was tenant-right, to the growth in the other three provinces, where there was none, it has been far more rapid in Ulster; and that is entirely owing to the fact and presence of tenant-right.

Some gentlemen have referred to speeches of mine, and have put me back to what is a very unacceptable task—that of reading them over again—but I must say that there is only one important particular in my speeches of 1870—to which I will at present refer—which I do not strictly and literally abide by. The principles upon which we have proceeded are, first, a perfectly frank acceptance of Irish custom; and, secondly, what is undoubtedly a great departure from the principles of free contract—namely, the introduction of judicial authority to settle a grievance between man and man with regard to agricultural holdings. Sir, I do not for a moment disguise the magnitude of that proposal. It is, if I may say so, the one really Radical proposal in this Bill. It is the one and only proposal that involves a strong and sharp departure from ordinary principles for the regulation of private affairs. I do not disguise it. But I ask you to observe this—First, it is required by the circumstances of the country; and, secondly, it is limited by those provisions which we have introduced, and which in every case, though

no notice has been taken of it, have left it open to parties to return, when they conveniently can, to the ordinary principles of contract.

Are we justified in introducing this Radical proposal for committing to a court the regulation of these private and personal appeals? In presenting this Bill to the House I stated what were not the reasons which, in my opinion, would justify it, and also what the reasons were which would. The necessity which I pleaded was a necessity, in the first place, arising from the unprecedented position of Ireland with regard to the pressure of the demand for land as compared with the supply; and, secondly, the unfortunate but inevitable results of the conduct of harsh and grasping and even cruel landlords, who, though few in proportion to the whole, have it fatally in their power to compromise the best interests of other men. I also quoted authority—and I have heard no one from the opposite side of the House make any reference to the authorities under which we are acting—I pointed out that the Commissioners had recommended the introduction of this great innovation. I will now refer to one Commissioner who sits before me—namely the hon. Member for Mid Lincolnshire (Mr. Chaplin). He is one of the fathers of this Bill. Far be it from me to say he has ever owned it, or even made the smallest confession in that direction. But in ascribing it to him I am doing him an honour. He is not aware of the extent of his connexion with this Bill. I will also refer to two persons who, when the Land Act of 1870 was under discussion in this House, recommended the reference of these matters to a court. One of them is a nobleman who is still alive—I mean Lord Winmarleigh. The other was the eminent man whose loss you are—and I cannot wonder at it—now deeply mourning. In 1870 Mr. Disraeli said—

“If a man without a lease, and who has paid his rent, is evicted, let his case go before the tribunal you shall appoint; let the Judge investigate all the elements of the equity of the case; and let him come to a decision which on one side shall guard the tenant from coercion, and, on the other, preserve the landlord from fraud.”—[3 *Hansard*, cxcix. 1871.]

That, of course, is the object of the new court. Therefore you have in those words the substance of this tremendous proposal. I shall now read the words of the hon. Member for Mid Lincolnshire, who has put his hand to this paragraph:—

“Bearing in mind the system by which the improvements and equipments of a farm are very generally the work of the tenant, and the fact that a yearly tenant is at any time liable to have his rent raised by the increased value given to his holding by the expenditure of his capital and labour, legislative interference to protect him from an arbitrary increase of rent does not seem unnatural, and we are inclined to think that by the majority of landowners a measure properly framed to accomplish this end would not be objected to.”

I understand the hon. gentleman to point to what I may call the preamble of the sentence. [Mr. CHAPLIN: Read the next paragraph.] I have not got it here; but the next paragraph treats of the three “F’s,” and we have not proposed the three “F’s.” I will come to that by-and-by. The hon. Member is quite justified in pointing out that the preamble to this sentence has reference exclusively to improvements. That is quite

true ; but the enacting part has not. If the hon. Member had been content to say in his report—"In consequence of the arbitrary increase of rent put upon the improvements of the tenant, we, the Commissioners, recommend that his improvements shall be protected by the intervention of a court," that would have been one thing. But that is not what he has done. He has recommended the intervention of the court for the purpose of preventing all cases of an arbitrary increase of rent. But an arbitrary increase of rent is not limited to the tenant's improvements. It includes the swallowing up of the tenant's interest, and taking advantage of his property and the state of the market, to get more than the commodity is worth. The hon. gentleman, in recommending that the tenant shall be protected against an arbitrary increase of rent, without limiting that recommendation in the slightest degree to the particular case of improvements, has made himself responsible for the great and the only violent recommendation of this Bill.

I admit the Commissioners have said nothing at all excepting about rent. They have said nothing about tenant-right ; they have said nothing about security and fixity of tenure. Did the Commissioners really suppose that you could bring in a court to determine rent and entirely refuse to take cognizance of the question of security of tenure ? Is it possible to say—"A Commission shall determine the rent to-day, and the landlord shall, if he please, put out the man to-morrow ?" The hon. Member will not rise and answer that question, although I paid him the compliment of ascribing to him the paternity of the Bill. The hon. gentleman will see that, if you authorize the court to fix the rent, it necessarily involves some duration of the rent. If you involve some duration of the rent you are fixing it, and between you and us the difference is only one of degree. We have not said rents shall be perpetual. We have introduced provisions by which they may be refixed from time to time, as circumstances would arise. In the same way with tenant-right, I do not believe the hon. Member, and I feel sure that no Member for Ireland, will say that when a court has fixed judicially the rent of a holding and given to that rent a certain term of years through which it shall exist indefeasibly, except by the fault of the tenant, the tenant's interest should not be an interest saleable in the market. These three things are inseparable. They are three strands of one cord, and they are absolutely indefeasible. We have largely qualified them all ; but to have attempted to deal with one of them and not made a consistent whole would, in my opinion, have proved totally unworthy of the great question with which we have to deal.

We have, therefore, I admit, with reference to the very grave circumstances of Ireland, made this great departure from the principles of free contract. But with that great departure we have combined provisions to enable the parties to return to free contract when they may find it expedient to do so. And, lastly, one of the principles of the Bill is in a set of provisions intended to promote and further the acquisition of capital and of a permanent proprietary interest, and advances of public money for certain other important purposes.

Under these circumstances I must own it is with the deepest regret that I have observed the conduct of the party opposite on this occasion.

I am very sorry that the noble Lord the Member for Haddingtonshire (Lord Elcho) is not in the House. The Opposition are going to support him in the assertion that—

“The leading provisions of the Land Law (Ireland) Bill are in the main economically unsound, unjust, and impolitic.”

My noble friend delivered his speech with such good humour, and was himself so obviously pleased with what fell from his lips, that it became infectious throughout the House. I myself was not insensible to the charm of it; and, I must say, it was an excellent example of a speech in which an experienced Member of Parliament showed that you may say very strong things without giving offence. He gave no offence to me; but I am sorry to say that he misapprehended and misunderstood the case, greatly, I think, to his own prejudice. Is it possible that any gentleman on the opposite side of the House can think that he is promoting either the interest of his party or of the country by representing that this Bill gives perpetuity of tenure, perpetual fixity of rent, and unlimited tenant right? As a matter of fact, the tenant-right is limited; the judicial rent is rent only for a term; and the security or possession given to the tenant is not only defeasible in consequence of his own breach of contract, but also after the first 15 years, which, after all, is not perpetuity. It is also defeasible if the landlord is able to make out a reasonable and sufficient case for resumption. We may be right or we may be wrong; but why begin the unfortunate course of inflaming and exaggerating your statement of the provisions of the Bill? Surely it was a case in which the public interest, and, most of all, your own interests, would make it desirable that you should understand everything in as favourable a sense as reason will permit you to attach to it.

So far as we are concerned, I am not complaining of what you have done; I am not at all sure that your conduct has been adverse to our Bill. Your censures and denunciations have gone forth through the length and breadth of Ireland as the strongest testimonials on behalf of our measure to secure to it the adhesion of the people; and I think it is very likely that you may have induced by your statements—entirely outstripping the fact—some persons in Ireland to think that the Bill contains what it does not contain. It is a very large and strong measure; it is a measure as large, I hope, as the necessities of that country demand. But we have carefully endeavoured to prevent its wanton or its needless enlargement, and to leave every ground and every opening for the maintenance of the present social relations in Ireland, and likewise for the return of that which we know to be the best system for the cultivation of land under all normal circumstances—namely, a system where its particulars are arranged by free discussion between one man and another.

“WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?”

That being so, what are the party opposite going to do? The noble lord the Member for North Leicestershire (Lord John Manners) has given notice of a hostile amendment. Everybody knows that the meaning of an amendment on the second reading is not only opposition

to the Bill, but it is the extreme form of opposition to the Bill. The noble Lord, however, who has been a member of several Cabinets, has not only given notice of an amendment, but has announced that he is going to vote for the amendment of the noble lord the Member for Haddingtonshire (Lord Elcho). I presume that he made that announcement on behalf of his colleagues. In the notice of the noble lord the Member for North Leicestershire, I perceive the first effect of the death of Lord Beaconsfield. If he had lived that notice would not, in my opinion, have been given. I have had an experience of Lord Beaconsfield from a post opposite to me; but it has been a long experience; and you do not remain wholly ignorant of a man with whom, on a thousand questions, you are obliged, however unequally, to measure swords. When, sir, a Liberal Government came into office in 1868, and proposed the disestablishment of the Irish Church, it would have been in the power of Lord Beaconsfield, if he had thought fit, to have prolonged the contest for years. On the contrary, I have not a doubt that Lord Beaconsfield thought that the issue was certain, and that for every interest—for the interest of the country, for the interests of his party and his own—the sooner the goal was reached the better. He might have, I believe, taken the same course of prolonging the contest on the Land Bill of 1870; and that Bill, relatively to the circumstances in which it was introduced, was quite as great an innovation—quite as daring a measure of remedy—estimated with reference to what went before, as the present Bill when regarded with reference to the measure of 1870.

Well, what is intended to be done now? Do you who sit opposite think—is there any one of you who thinks—that this question will ever be settled by a measure smaller than the Bill before the House? And if by powerful combination, beginning below the Gangway, among a limited number, but still not of unimportant persons, and carried on elsewhere with stronger ties and ramifications—if you thus succeed in overthrowing this Bill, and the Government which attaches its fortune to this Bill, and if you take their places, you will pass, not a smaller but a larger measure. Nor am I the first person who has said this. I know not if the hon. gentleman the Member for the City of Cork (Mr. Parnell) is in his place. I hold in my hand a speech which he delivered on the 6th of December last at Waterford, and which I read with great interest; but I am not going to quote from it for the purpose of making any charge against him. It was perfectly natural of him to say what he did. He began by predicting that if Mr. Gladstone should proceed to legislate on the Irish Land Question he would infallibly break up his Cabinet, “and that,” he added, “would be rather unfortunate, or it may seem to be rather unfortunate, for us; but I do not think the event will prove that it is unfortunate for us.” He goes on to say that for England it would be unfortunate; but for him, with his views, it would not be unfortunate. The meaning, sir, is plain. The hon. gentleman knows well that if the party opposite came into office they would, under pressure, as they have done before, bring in a larger Bill than this; and that the words “fraud, force, and folly,” as applied to the three “F’s,” would gradually dwindle and grow pale, and that the

hon. Member might wave his flag of triumph over a measure passed by a Conservative Government of which, perhaps, some Conservatives would themselves be heard to say, the landlords scowling in the background—"how much more liberal a measure it is, after all, than that which was brought forward by the Liberal Party."

But hon. gentlemen opposite are judges of their own conduct. The matter, however, is one of a serious character. We are playing with edged tools in the state Ireland is now in. There is not a step which we have taken in reference to this measure which has not been taken under an overwhelming sense of responsibility. We do not mean to trifle with that which we have taken in hand. You must judge of your own duty; we must judge of ours. We shall use every effort legitimately belonging to us: first, to pass this Bill; secondly, to pass it speedily; and, thirdly, to pass it in an effectual form. My right hon. friend (Mr. W. E. Forster) has been charged, I think, needlessly—I do not see that his words gave the slightest colour to the charge—with having given an intimation that we should haughtily refuse to discuss Amendments in the Bill. No, sir, we have no such intention. I am not looking to one quarter of the House in preference to another. In proportion to our intense anxiety to be the bearers of some message of peace and good to Ireland is our willingness and desire to receive, from whatever quarter it may come, assistance in bringing the Bill as nearly as may be to perfection. We are not so vain as to think our first effort within the walls of the Cabinet room enable us to dispense with all the criticism, suggestions, and improvements which the intellect and ingenuity of this great assembly may furnish. But permit me to say—and I hope I shall not be misunderstood—not on the ground of any will or decision of ours, but because of the logical law of events, that nothing appears to me so unlikely as that the Bill should be to any great extent changed. Were it to be vitally and fundamentally changed, in the sense of the amendment of the noble lord the Member for Haddingtonshire, the people of Ireland, it may be assumed, would reject it as one man. But there is another construction to be put on the suggestion of change, and I have to suppose the case of a fundamental alteration in a sense which a portion of the Irish Members may desire. In considering that matter, among other points, I cannot exclude from our consideration that the settlement of this question does not depend on the judgment of this House alone. There is another assembly which we must confront where we are in a small minority; but which will claim, and is constitutionally entitled, to give its independent vote on the provisions of this Bill. If we hold by those provisions, I am so confident of their general character—I am so deeply persuaded of their general moderation, as well as efficiency—that I feel we can with a good conscience and with a sanguine hope address ourselves to whatever duties may belong to us for the purpose of the prompt passing of this Bill. But, if they see we are prepared to alter its character, in what is called the popular sense; and, having brought it in as one measure, to send it up to them as another; most justly might those who will have elsewhere to pronounce upon it say—"We are dealing with a set of men who do not know their own minds, and we refuse to defer to their authority."

I am, therefore, well convinced that the nature of this Bill, although it may be, as I have admitted, open to criticism in some particulars, is, nevertheless, of such a character that the ultimate choice of Parliament will be between the Bill in its essence or nothing; between the acceptance or the rejection of the Bill on the lines on which it now stands. As I have said, we on this side will not shrink from the performance of our part, for if we did there would be no condemnation too severe to pass on us for our rashness and temerity. At this crisis I gratefully acknowledge the spirit in which this Bill has been generally received in Ireland. The landlords of Ireland showed in 1870 that they were not deficient in penetration. They were, I believe, at that time as much as they are now under the impression that their true interest is to have this question settled, and to have it settled at once. I gratefully acknowledge the generous reception which our proposals have received in Ireland. They have been received there as by men who have felt the force of the evils pressing upon them, and who were desirous of hailing the advent of whatever would give fair promise of offering a remedy. Let that generous reception in Ireland be met by a corresponding feeling on this side of the Channel, and within the walls of these great Legislative Assemblies. Then the year 1881 will not have passed away without adding to the Statute Book another great emancipating and redeeming measure, necessary alike for the prosperity of Ireland, the fame of Parliament, and the strength and solidity of the United Kingdom.

FAIR TRADE.

(AT LEEDS, OCTOBER 7 and 8, 1881.)

I AM very sorry to exchange the delightful business of listening to the music we have just heard for the active office of providing you with sound of a far inferior order. But necessity, ladies and gentlemen, is laid upon me, and will excuse me in your eyes. With respect to the mass of the addresses which I have just received from the hands of so many good and gallant soldiers in a good cause, I will only venture to assure you in general that these addresses and the circumstances under which they have been presented to me will not pass away from my mind as readily as I was compelled to discharge them from my hand, in order that I might not appear before you in an unbecoming position. The contents of these addresses, gentlemen, so far as they have been read, or as I am acquainted with them, introduce a variety of topics, from which I can only during this visit to Leeds attempt to make a selection, and even with the whole of that selection I shall not attempt

to deal upon this single occasion. But there are two expressions, two sentiments that have come before me of which I am desirous to take special notice. I begin in the first place with the address which was read from the Association of which you (Mr. Kitson) are the head. In that address, almost affectionate, and certainly touching in its terms, I received no expression with greater gratification than that in which it was generously said that you believed that to whatever party I belonged in the course of my life I had acted with a sincere desire for the public good. I will not affect to disclaim that statement, because I really believe it to be true. And, moreover, I sometimes think—though I am in many points much misunderstood—that the fact of my having in view the public good, with a true and earnest purpose, was of itself a very great assistance in the enlightenment of my mind upon those points upon which it required to be enlightened, and has helped to land me, gentlemen, in the ranks of the party with which I have now in general acted for 35 years, and of which, during the short remainder of life, I hope to be, and am convinced I shall be, a sympathising and an earnest member.

THE OLD CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

I wish to say one word of the Conservative party as it was in the time when I was associated with it. It was then led by Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington—two illustrious names which never can be heard in this assembly, or in any assembly of Englishmen like this, except with cordial respect and veneration. And I rejoice to say, gentlemen, of the Conservative party of that day, that it was associated with you in what are now many of your most distinctive principles. The Liberal party of that period—I mean between the first Reform Act and the repeal of the Corn Laws—was attached to public economy and purity of administration; but the Conservative party of that period maintained no unequal rivalry with you in the pursuit of those great objects. They were common—I say it fearlessly—they were common and without distinction to all parties. And I wish I could always see in every gentleman who calls himself a Liberal the same sense of strict public duty in regard to economy in public expenditure which was as characteristic of Sir Robert Peel—I will even venture to say—as it was of the distinguished and admirable, although now nearly perhaps forgotten, public servant, Joseph Hume. Not in respect of these subjects alone, but in regard to a matter which has a large place in your hearts and understandings—in regard to foreign policy—I say it fearlessly, that there are two principles of enormous weight in which I, at least, have had nothing to change—the principle that every other country is to be credited with the same good motives as ourselves until it has given proof to the contrary, and that every Power, great and small, is entitled to exactly the same rights and exactly the same treatment. I will say that that was as distinctive a principle of the Conservative party together with the Liberals of those days as it is of the Liberal party now. And yet once more, that which is called the policy of peace, that which is so often held up as a mark of ridicule and scoffing in the Tory meetings of to-day—that policy of peace was as dear to Sir Robert

Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and Lord Aberdeen, and was as sedulously and fearlessly pursued by them as it ever has been, or ever can be, by any public man in the service of his country.

HIS SUCCESSORS.

In one other preliminary remark in these addresses reference has been made to my past in terms too indulgent, and to my future, I am afraid, in terms too hopeful. It is not for me, gentlemen, at my time of life, with my nearness to its inevitable close, to anticipate those future years of strength and of service which you are good enough to desire on my behalf. But yet, gentlemen, though I don't indulge in any such anticipations,—for I confess that I feel that repose of mind and reflection on other matters are more appropriate to the latest stage of this our human existence,—yet I don't on that account look forward with the slightest lack of confidence to your future as the Liberal party of this country. Whenever it may be my duty to hand over the charge that is now intrusted to me, little worthy as I am, I shall hand it over to men who already possess your confidence—who already have proved in many a well-fought field what mettle they are made of. I do not mean only to speak of one whose distinguished name is dear to every heart among you—I mean my excellent friend Mr. Bright—because he, too, is but one stage behind me in the journey through the vale of years; but I speak of Lord Granville, of whom most intimate, almost daily, communication during many anxious years has given me the most thorough knowledge of his great abilities, of his admirable devotion to the service of his country, and of his capacity to serve it, if Providence should so ordain, in a yet higher place. I speak of Lord Granville, and I speak of Lord Hartington, who, in the struggles of the House of Commons, has likewise earned the confidence of the country, and has enabled you to build your high expectations of his future upon an ample experience of what he has been to you in the past. And therefore I look forward with confidence to the Liberal party as in no degree dependent upon the slender thread, as yet unbroken, of my own political life.

I believe, gentlemen, and I think you believe with me, that under all ordinary and normal circumstances, though this country is divided between two classes of political opinions, the Liberal opinion is that of the majority of the people; and I go a little further and say this: when we were defeated in 1874 we were not defeated through the energies and the growth of Toryism, but we were defeated by divisions that had unhappily insinuated themselves amongst us. And it was not the absolute breaking up of the party, for that, of course, was a thing never dreamt of; but it was the prevalence of perhaps some sectional ideas or the natural and necessary shortcomings, or at any rate the actual shortcomings of myself and of others who led them—at any rate it was our own divisions—it was because our several regiments did not march steadily up to the breach in 1874 that we were in a minority in the last Parliament. What I wish to say to you, gentlemen, is this—I see no signs of such divisions now. I doubt whether for 30 years—I mean since the great Free Trade struggle—the Liberal party, speaking gene-

rally, has been in a state so healthy ; and never have I had occasion so much to appreciate, along with its generous indulgence, the signs of that cordial union as during the anxious experiences of the long session of Parliament just passed. Therefore, gentlemen, as you may look back with confidence upon your past, so I say fearlessly you may rely upon your future. It depends upon yourselves to maintain that energetic union. If there were any needless divisions in 1874, I think the consequences of those divisions have administered an altogether sufficient warning, and that if we erred in the past, we are not likely to fall into these errors again.

"WHY I AM MEMBER FOR MIDLOTHIAN."

I came to Leeds for the proper and primary purpose, not of repaying, but to acknowledge a threefold debt of gratitude which I never can repay, but which I can cordially acknowledge. You returned me to Parliament, as has been truly said, under circumstances on which I need not comment at length ; yet a word or two I may say upon the fact that I appear before you as Member for Mid-Lothian, and not as Member for Leeds. It was, gentlemen, to me a great personal consolation and satisfaction that I was never called upon from the course of circumstances to exercise the option between Leeds and Mid-Lothian, as my seat for both was lost by the acceptance of office before the time came for doing so. But at the same time, gentlemen, I may remind you of what you know as well as I do—why I am Member for Mid-Lothian and not Member for Leeds. The citadel of Toryism in Leeds is not so very strong but that a moderate force might hope to carry it. But that was not the case with reference to the citadel of Toryism in Mid-Lothian. It frowned down upon the county like that old Castle of Edinburgh from the rock that overhangs the city ; and the gallant men of that county invited me, and I could not for very shame's sake refuse their invitation, to try and scale the rock, and make ourselves masters of the castle. And while we were fighting in Mid-Lothian there was no loss to anybody in leaving you to deal, with your unassisted force, with the Toryism of Leeds. Gentlemen, you have also conferred on me a favour that I should in vain attempt adequately to acknowledge, in your acceptance of my son as one of your Members. I cannot trust myself, and it would be quite unnecessary if I could, to speak in detail upon that subject. I will only express the hope that you will be repaid for your generosity by his devotion, and my confidence that he will never do anything to dishonour either the name he bears, or, what is much more important, the great community with which you have been pleased to associate his fortunes. I have mentioned, gentlemen, two points of the threefold debt ; but there was one event that left a deeper impression on my mind than either of those that we have mentioned. It was an event much less conspicuous in the public eye ; it was the appearance of that deputation who, not in the hour of success, not in the hour of hope, but when the skies were darkest and the prospects of public fortune lowest, came to see me in London, and, without asking from me any reply, without even permitting me by any sort of condition to reply, told me of their intention to select me as their candidate

and return me for Leeds. I thought that the undoubted determination, the thorough pluck that was shewn by those gentlemen of Leeds in forming that plan at that time, was an event which should have impressed me with the belief, if I wanted fresh evidence of it, how worthy they are to belong to the great country with which they are associated, and what good representatives they were of the best public spirit of England. For the spirit which then prevailed was not the spirit which is now in the ascendant. There are to be found, gentlemen, in every country the elements of a temper which is apt to display itself in assumption and arrogance and aggression—in every community there will be such elements; but in this community they never become dangerous unless they receive countenance from the leaders of one of the great political parties; and then, of necessity, they become very dangerous. That is a temper which, when we see it in other countries, we all condemn. It is just as well known in France as it is here. In France it passes, as you all know, under the name of Chauvinism. It is as like as two peas to that which we call here "Jingoism," and yet, strange to say, that portion of Englishmen who are most infected by "Jingoism" are most loud in their denunciations of Chauvinism. They say France has been under the influence of Chauvinism in the steps she has taken in the province of Tunis, and their denunciations are unbounded. I won't now enter into that question, but I will say this, that if they are right in what they say, they are not the people to reproach France for what she has done, for they are the people who have endeavoured—aye, and I am sorry to say on some recent occasions with some success—to lead this great nation into the exhibition of a similar temper, and to allow it to dominate in the direction of its public affairs. Gentlemen, it is as a protest against the prevalence of that spirit, as you well know, that your deputation came from Leeds; that you have framed many parts of the addresses presented to me; and that I (who had fondly believed that the hour of my retirement had arrived some years before) have again been for the time brought into the front rank of political conflict. I therefore acknowledge the threefold debt I owe to Leeds for returning me to Parliament, for the return of my son, and for the remarkable exhibition of determined intention in the hour of need, and when the policy to which we are attached was, to all appearance, less likely to prevail than it had appeared to me at any former moment.

And now, gentlemen, I will try to touch two points in particular, if you will allow me, of those that have been raised—variously and multifariously raised—in the addresses that are before me. It is not, gentlemen, that you want instruction upon these points; for in truth, if that were all, I do not know why in the world I should come to preach Liberal principles in Leeds, which would be an enterprise as bootless as "carrying coals to Newcastle." But what we say in Leeds on this occasion may possibly be heard in quarters where it is more wanted. Let me say something on subjects that have necessarily occupied much of my thoughts of late years—the subject of land and the subject of trade.

THE LAND QUESTION.

The subject of land has been pressed upon all our minds, first of all by the legislation for Ireland, or rather, I will say, first of all by the temporary depression of British agriculture; and, secondly, by the recent legislation for Ireland. Of that legislation for Ireland I will only say, upon the present occasion, that it was legislation for Ireland, and not for England or for Scotland. The circumstances of land in England and Scotland demand the close attention of the Government, and we have much to do with regard to it; but they are not the same as the circumstances of Ireland, and that which was most exceptional in the Act relating to Ireland, justified as it was in our minds and felt by the majority of Parliament to be justified by the peculiar circumstances of the condition of that country, cannot be held to have an equal or parallel application to a country whose condition has never been subjected to the action of such disturbing and distorting and paralysing forces as, unhappily, has been the case with respect to the various interests connected with the land in Ireland. But although that is so, and although I at least shall never be a party to the introduction of the Irish Land Act into England, nor indeed do I believe that that is the desire of any sensible—I beg pardon, of any appreciable portion of the people of this country,—yet there is much to be done. And there are three points of view in which we may look at this question of the land. The first is to deal with it financially. And here you will observe, gentlemen, that our friends the Tories are very active; indeed, I must compliment them upon their activity in general. People talk of a Parliamentary recess; the leaders of the Tories do not appear to me to have any recess at all. Ever since the prorogation they have been at it, and no doubt they intend to continue until the next Queen's Speech. There is a passage in the vivid account of the French Revolution by Carlyle, where, in one of the preliminary stages, I think, he says, "Riots were sputtering all over the face of France;" and in the same manner Conservative meetings have been sputtering over the face of England. As, unhappily, I do not address you at a time when public affairs are free from circumstances of anxiety, as there are or may be storms in the air, it is natural enough that the storm-birds should go abroad and see what they can make of them, and they have paid me a particular compliment, for which I cannot be too grateful, for they have stopped me up, before and behind. Last night and the night before, and the night before that, I believe, and again I am told to-night, and then again next week, there are to be Conservative meetings with Conservative leaders, so as effectually to neutralise any mischief which may result from this little gathering. I feel myself, ladies and gentlemen, to be absolutely mobbed by these Conservative meetings. The order in this town is admirable, and I have not the least fear of being mobbed, but I feel that I am being mobbed by these extraordinary gatherings of last week, this week, next week, and all the weeks to come. Well, then, gentlemen, at these meetings there is a great deal said on the subject of land, and here it is very necessary to warn you, and to warn the country. Let us see how the financial part of the question of land is dealt with by the Tory party.

THE MALT TAX.

I call you to witness, gentlemen, that for the last half-century down to the last year the favourite cry of the Tories was the repeal of the malt-tax. When the Governments of Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli or Lord Beaconsfield were in office, some way or other the malt-tax seemed to sit quite easy on the shoulders of the Tory party; but whenever there was a Liberal Government in power, every opportunity was taken to shew that the malt-tax was an intolerable burden upon the British farmer, and that the thing to set him right and straight was to repeal the malt-tax. But the Tories never attempted to deal with the malt-tax. Sir Stafford Northcote, as Chancellor of the Exchequer for some six years, with the most obedient majority of the House of Commons at his back, never dreamt of repealing the malt-tax. But last year, before we were six months old as a Government, we determined to repeal the malt-tax. And why, gentlemen? Not because we believed in the absurd pretensions that had been set up by the old malt-tax repealers, but because we knew, and had always admitted, that there were very important reasons for thinking that it was unjust. In the first place, the malt-tax disturbed us as Free Traders: and as Free Traders we could not approve of any tax that disturbed the action of all connected with farming in the country. It attached to the farming of certain soils which produced the finest barley a fictitious value in addition to its natural advantages. As Free Traders, we are opposed to all legislation that interferes with one description of commodity as against another. There was another reason why we repealed the malt-tax, and that is that you, as Liberals, have always been forward, and I hope always will be forward, to get rid of any excise duty. That was an excise duty which positively had this effect with regard to a vast trade—for the value of the beer trade and of the different malt liquors produced in this country is such as to make it one of the largest trades in the country—that the old malt-tax absolutely prescribed to people out of what materials, and what materials alone, they should make their beer. In repealing the malt-tax, then, we were glad to give that which we believed to be just and right to the farming interest, and to give to British industry in yet another province that absolute freedom which we desired to see it enjoy. But what happened? That the Tories have turned their backs on the repeal of the malt-tax, and they now, without the slightest, or even decent, regard to their professions of half a century ago, say that it is a worthless, insignificant affair, and perhaps, on the whole, has in it more evil than good. It is difficult to deal with people who proceed in that way, and who, when you think you are making a justifiable approximation to their views, turn round upon you and denounce you in terms of violence, or else represent as totally unnecessary that which they have formerly held up as a capital article both of public justice and of national policy. Oh! but they have turned to other things. They tell the farmers, "We must have you relieved of a great deal of the burden of the rates." It is well worth while, gentlemen, for us to dig a little below the surface of that profession, and see what it means.

GRANTS IN AID.

In the first place, gentlemen, don't suppose for a moment that in my opinion rates ought not to be dealt with. I, being an old man, may not have much to say to the matter, but if I were 20 years younger I would say there is nothing in regard to which I would more desire a large and extended change. I am an enemy of the present system of what are called grants in aid. Of course you will understand I am not laying down mathematical propositions. I do not speak absolutely, but in general I see the greatest mischief in these grants in aid. It seems to me the object of the Tories, for the sake of obtaining the votes of the farmers, is to extend these grants without limit. In the first place, I am against an extension of grants in aid, or of reliefs to the rates in any form, without a thorough consideration of the question of local government. For these grants in aid, what do they do? In the first place they encourage extravagance. In the second place, they promote centralisation, and they relegate to the offices in Downing Street matters which ought to be disposed of by the local authorities in respective districts. In the third place, they sap the very principles of local government by depriving you of the means for the exercise of its functions. And, gentlemen, I cannot pass by the subject of local government without impressing upon you that there is no one among you who discharges the office of local citizenship who is more deeply impressed with its profound importance than I am myself. Local government, gentlemen, is the training school for Imperial government. Habits formed in connection with local government are the habits which enable this nation to find men in abundance, from time to time, thoroughly competent to carry on the business and the government of the country. And on all these grounds I think that the present system of grants in aid is a system that requires to be checked, nay, requires to be greatly changed. It is also, in my opinion, a most impolitic system, upon this ground: the collection of Imperial taxes is always a matter of serious political delicacy and, indeed, difficulty. The collection of taxes for local purposes is a thing comparatively easy. Now, gentlemen, what I would say is this. In the first place, remember what I am going to say now will have reference, not to local taxes in towns, but to local taxes in the country. The circumstances are exceedingly different. They have increased in towns with a rapidity quite unknown in the country. And likewise the question of the ultimate incidence of the rate is a question much more open to debate and doubt in the populous districts than it is in the rural districts. But, upon my word, I must say of rates generally, and especially rates in the country, I think the time might come when it might be very proper to make large, direct allocations of public taxes to the local communities for them to expend, subject to fixed rules, laid down by the State, as economically and beneficially as they can. Gentlemen, I must endeavour to bring into view that which it seems to be the object of Toryism to keep out of view, and it is this—that every sixpence which you take off the rates in an agricultural district in this country, while it is an immediate relief to the tenant, is an ultimate gift to the landlord; and, taking that point

of view, the demand that something shall be taken off taxation from the general exchequer of the country in order to be applied to the payment of rates in rural districts, while it may be very agreeable to the farmer for the moment—and I do not at this moment inquire what ought to be done for him—is a demand of the landlords of this country that their descendants shall, to that extent, be quartered upon the public exchequer. Now, gentlemen, that is a very serious matter for consideration. And when I say this I speak as one whose fortunes and the fortunes of his family are closely connected with the prosperity of agriculture, but who, at the same time, will always strive to prevent any bias from taking possession of his mind on that ground in the consideration of these great subjects.

THE AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS BILL.

Well, the question of dealing with the landlords and the land embraces, as respects landlords, the great subjects of the devolution of land, the transfer of land, the registry of land, and the mode of borrowing upon land. These are subjects of great importance to all persons connected with land, on which I hope that the present Government, whether while I am in it, or after I cease to belong to it, will deal efficiently and fearlessly. There is another part of the question of land yet more urgent, and that is that which touches the tenant. The true interest of the farmer, the just object of the farmer, is to have his interest in the land made secure. I see there are some professions made in these Tory meetings that they are quite willing that that should be done. Willing that it should be done! Why, they told us five years ago that they had done it. They passed a Bill, which they called the Agricultural Holdings Bill, and that was the great legislative achievement of the six or seven years of the late Government. That was the summit of what they could do for the farmers, to whom they owed their existence. I have heard that constantly quoted. I ordered a good many copies of the Bill, and in order to see if they could make anything out of it, I sent it among the tenantry. I sent copies—I thought it would be best not to scatter them wholesale, and I selected two or three—to the intelligent, the most intelligent, men among the farmers; but I could not get them to look at it. They absolutely neither knew nor cared one farthing about it. That Bill was the most complete abortion that I have ever known in the handling of a great legislative subject. And this abortion was the only achievement of an Administration that lasted six or seven years. However, the question has arisen, and arisen in a very serious form, in consequence of the pressure upon the farmer due to a series of unfavourable seasons. I will not enter into any details as to modes of proceeding. As I have said that in my opinion the Irish Land Act ought not to become the English or Scotch Land Law, I say as emphatically that it is an object of capital and immediate importance for the farmer to see that effectual and not abortive measures are taken to secure the whole interest of the tenants, not part of that interest, but the whole interest—his interest in his improvements, and his interest, as the law may define it, in his tenure. There is here a point of junction between trading and landed interests in relation to the

matter we are discussing. The trade of the country has been severely and even lamentably depressed, in certain branches particularly. It has been depressed first of all, I believe, in what I shall call this district, because, although I don't mean the town of Leeds in particular—perhaps in some degree the town of Leeds—I mean very much more the great sister town of Bradford—that district which, as far as there has been a pressure due to the special action of foreign competition, may be thought, and thought justly, to have experienced that pressure.

THE DEPRESSION OF TRADE.

I won't trouble you in a great assembly of this kind with a number of figures, but those figures show the case very simply. Taking the woollen and worsted manufacturers together, and taking our trade with certain countries, namely, France, Germany, and Holland, and Belgium, I believe it is the case that our imports of woollen and worsted goods have come very close upon our exports. The figures, so far as I can make them out, are these. We export £8,650,000, and we import £8,509,000. That is very nearly a balance. I will not now discuss the question whether it is in the power of the capitalists and the industrial interests of this country to amend that balance; my own belief is that it is. I often say that the English producer wants a good deal of pressure upon him to make him do his best, but that when the pressure is put upon him, he will compete successfully with anybody in the world—unless he were to make an attempt where the natural circumstances are entirely and absolutely against him. I won't go into that, but I take this point, because it enables me to raise conveniently a question to which I think it necessary to allude. The question is not whether the depression of the last few years has been severe, for it has been severe. I, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, have had to lament it. It is not true that the revenue has yet recovered from the effect of it. The revenue, as on the last quarter day, was, I think, in the Press estimated rather more favourably than it deserved. It may be said that the revenue is somewhat recovering from it, but it is very far indeed from complete recovery, although I have no doubt this complete recovery will arrive. But, gentlemen, what has been the main cause of this depression of our trade? Now that is a most important question, because systematic attempts are made to persuade you—and though they won't succeed here, they may succeed elsewhere—to persuade you—I mean the people of England—that the main cause of our depression has been that we cannot carry on our trade with foreign countries in consequence of the pressure of hostile tariffs, and, as a consequence, that Free Trade is a failure.

Now let us look at the basis of fact which is under this monstrous doctrine. I observe that those who write upon these subjects on the wrong side, very generally avoid specific facts, and deal with generalities, and I think that is a proof of a very great deal of sound discretion on their part. When they get out of that tangled and cloud region, and come to deal with facts, they get into sad scrapes. Here is a case. You had not long ago a noble Lord condescending to come into the neighbourhood of Leeds, and endeavouring to enlighten the people in this

neighbourhood as to the terrible dangers we are in from foreign competition. Lord Laseelles quoted a statement made by Mr. James Lowther, in Lincolnshire, that a great railway station had recently been erected at York. And so far, gentlemen, I congratulate the noble Lord and Mr. James Lowther on their accuracy as to that fact. That would not have answered the purpose, however, and so they went to produce for once a fact instead of generality, and the fact was this, that this great station at York was built of Belgian iron. That statement, I believe, has been contradicted in the newspapers; but contradictions never obtain a currency so wide as an original statement of that kind. This was a very authentic fact, but it had not a shadow of foundation—as you know very well. While Lord Laseelles, at Kirkstall, was instructing his audience that the York station was built of Belgian iron, if, instead of importing information from Lincolnshire, he had come for information to Leeds, everybody would have told him that the iron for that station was made by you, sir (Mr. Kitson); and that the erection of the station was conducted by Mr. Bntler, of Leeds also. I hope our Tory friends will take this statement in the spirit in which it is made. I recommend them not to deal with matters of fact in the future, but to confine themselves cheerfully to generalities, where nobody can grapple with them.

The question as a matter of fact is, Has the pressure of foreign tariffs—which I do not undervalue, as you will see by-and-by—been or not been the main cause of the depression of trade? Now, you will agree with me in this, that the main cause of the depression of trade has been either the unwillingness or inability of foreign countries to buy, or it has been the decrease of the purchasing power at home. Let us see which of these has been the main factor in that depression, because it is upon the assumption that the foreign question is the great cause that is founded the recommendation now so confidently made to go back to the state of things we parted with some thirty years ago. Now, I want to measure—and it is possible to do it without much difficulty, and with sufficient, though not minute, accuracy—I want to measure what has been the amount of depression or contraction of our foreign trade, and what, on the other hand, has been the decrease of the purchasing power at home. I take the year which presented the very highest amount of exports—256 millions of British and Irish goods and produce. I will assume—though you all know very well that those 256 millions were exported with an inflated state of prices, a state of prices that could not possibly be maintained, a state of prices which, as regarded the iron and coal trade, was totally unexampled—but assuming that volume of trade as the natural state of things, which is an enormous assumption, I will show you what is the decrease in the purchasing power, the actual loss to the people of this country that has accrued through the depression in connection with our foreign trade. If the value of the exports had continued in 1878, 1879, and 1880, the three years of great agricultural depression, and of depression in trade and commerce—if that high scale of exports had continued, we should have exported in those years 768 millions of goods and produce; instead of which we have only exported 607 millions. That was a decrease of 161 millions in three years; but

of course it was not all loss. What was lost was the profit upon that decrease, and I take the profit at the rate at which it is usually assumed—namely, 10 per cent., and I shall show you in that way that the country was sixteen millions poorer in consequence of the contraction of its foreign trade. There should be a further item put down, which I will allow for liberally. I will assume that there was an additional loss of eight millions in the profit of the carrying trade of those sixteen millions by this country to foreign countries. And if I add the eight millions to the sixteen millions, I show that this country is perhaps twenty-four millions the poorer. I have endeavoured to make the allowances against myself, and I assume—though it is doubtful—that the country is twenty-four millions the poorer—a very serious amount—in consequence of the contraction of our foreign trade since the time when our exports were at the maximum.

LOSSES BY BAD HARVESTS.

Now let me turn to the effect of the bad harvests. What have been our losses by bad harvests in 1878, 1879, and 1880? and, of course, when I speak of harvests I speak of the whole agricultural produce of the land, including root crops, grass, and everything. Gentlemen, I believe it is a moderate estimate over the three kingdoms to place that loss at 120 millions sterling. Many place it higher, considerably higher. I am convinced, if I were only to take the reductions of rent that have occurred, and the allowances upon rents, that it is a moderate statement to say that the agricultural products in these three years fell short by 120 millions sterling in the aggregate of what they would have been if the harvests had been good. That is all sheer loss except that there was a saving on the getting in of all the goods represented by the 120 millions. Let us suppose that the expenses of getting in the agricultural crop are upon the average one-sixth, taking all descriptions of agricultural produce together. Well, then, even if the farmer, in losing £120,000,000 on his produce, saved £20,000,000, which he would have expended in getting it in, the loss would still be £100,000,000. And, gentlemen, what we show therefore, is this, that while it is an extravagant statement to say that the country was £24,000,000 poorer on account of the contraction of its foreign trade, it is not an extravagant statement to say that it was £100,000,000 poorer on account of that remarkable series of deficient harvests in those years. The principal seat of this depression is not to be looked for in the pressure of foreign tariffs, though that is very serious. It is to be looked for in the bad harvests. We may reasonably hope that these will not continue. The present harvest is one of great difficulty to judge of. I have made the best inquiries in my power, and I believe it is distinguished almost beyond any other harvest we have had by its inequality. The returns in certain cases are admirable; in other cases they are very deficient. Some important crops, from the failure of which we have greatly suffered of late years, such as potatoes, are—at all events in our neighbourhood, and this, of course, is a thing we have nothing but local knowledge to go by—abundant and healthy almost beyond precedent. I saw two or three nights ago, dug up in a cottage garden, a potato which weighed

11b. 5oz.; and anyone who is accustomed at all to these things will know what sort of a potato season—the root also being healthy—it is that gives results like these. But that I do not dwell upon. It is a safe thing to say that no adverse decree of Providence has gone forth against the harvests of this country, and that we shall hope for a recurrence of average fruitfulness in future years which will restore the home market, the greatest by far of the markets in which we are interested, to a better state.

“OUR OLD FRIEND PROTECTION.”

But this depression is made the subject of an attempt to propagate a great and most mischievous delusion. An institution has been formed with the imposing name of the National Fair Trade League. What, gentlemen, is its object, and what is its meaning? It bears a suspicious likeness to our old friend Protection. Protection was dead and buried thirty years ago. He has come out of his grave and is walking abroad, and his long experience of the atmosphere below ground has not made him look a bit more attractive than they used to be before he was the subject of that experience; and the consequence is that he has found it convenient to assume an *alias*, and if you met him in the street and said, “Oh, Mr. Protection, how do you do?” he would say, “I beg your pardon, I know nothing of Mr. Protection; I am Mr. Fair Trade, and have no relationship whatever with Mr. Protection.” And speaking seriously, gentlemen, although an article has been written in perfect good faith by Mr. Protection himself in the “Nineteenth Century,” there is a very good antidote to it. The name at the foot of it is that of Mr. Eeroyd, the Member for Preston; but Mr. Eeroyd actually says that he writes in the name of Fair Trade. The name of Protection, as I have said, is kept back, but they are not satisfied with keeping back the name. Mr. Eeroyd, in the simplicity of his heart, writes a serious complaint, and expresses a grave apprehension. He says he is very much afraid that the Fair Trade movement will be mistaken for Protection by those whose object it is to confuse the issue. He wants a good lump of duty put upon foreign manufacture; he wants a duty of 5s. a quarter upon corn, and all this he says he wants, not at all for Protection, but in the name of “Fair Trade”; only he is afraid that some Liberals are actually so perverse that they will endeavour to represent that he is agitating for Protection. When I read this article it reminded me of a most amusing passage in an admirable book, which I hope will never cease to be a book that will be read in the homes of this country. It is “Gulliver’s Travels.” Everybody has read in it the history of men six inches high and of men sixty feet high, and the history of creatures more extraordinary still in all their conditions of life, who were not men, but one of the most strange tribes ever conceived. In closing the book Dean Swift says:—

“Thus, gentle reader, I have given thee a faithful history of my travels for sixteen years and about seven months, wherein I have not been so studious of ornament as of truth. I could perhaps, like others, have astonished thee with strange, improbable tales, but what I rather chose to narrate has been matter of fact in the plainest style, because my simple desire was to inform, and not to delight. I

heartily wish that a law were enacted under which every traveller should be compelled, on coming back to this country, to promise that he would tell what he had himself seen, and that he would tell nothing but the truth."

And just so, Mr. Ecroyd is quite ready to take an oath that Fair Trade has nothing at all to do with Protection, and he expects us to accept this doctrine just as Dean Swift expected us, or wittily affected to expect us, to believe that his fictions were facts, and that other people's facts were fictions.

FAIR TRADE.

Now, what is this Fair Trade system? It proposes that we shall tax foreign manufactures in order that they may untax our manufactures. That is its first proposal. Well now, gentlemen, it appears to me to be a considerable exaggeration of a great Christian precept. There is a great Christian precept that if a man strikes you on one cheek you should "turn to him the other also;" but the precept with Mr. Ecroyd and others is, "if somebody smites you on one cheek you should smite yourself on the other also." That appears to me to be a needless exaggeration. But let that pass, and let us see whether the thing is practicable. We are to smite ourselves on the other; but we are to do so in order to induce somebody else to do something that he ought, but is not disposed, to do, and we are to force him to do it by hitting him. I think there is a good old English maxim, that if you are to strike you ought to strike hard. Can you strike the foreigner hard by retaliatory tariffs? What manufactures do you import from abroad? In all 45 millions. What manufactures do you export? Nearer 220 millions—over 200 millions. If you are to make the foreigner feel, you must make him feel by striking him in his largest interests; but the interest which he has in sending manufactures to you is one of his small interests and not of his large interests, and you are invited to inflict wounds on him on a field measured by 45 millions, while he has got exactly the same power of inflicting wounds upon you on a field measured by more than 200 millions. The case the people feel most is the case of America. I can't even now mention the case of America, but the thought will cross the mind of the great tragedy which has lately been enacted in that country. England has well acquitted herself of her duty, has well given vent to her sentiments on the death of President Garfield. We have seen him die with unparalleled suffering as a Christian and as a hero. That is recorded in the heart of this nation; it is like a new and perpetual pledge of amity and affection between the two countries; but notwithstanding that, and though I believe that there is but one sentiment on that subject, yet people are very sore about the American tariff. The Americans hit us very hard with their duties, and there is a great reduction no doubt in our exports to America. But still how do we stand? America sends to us less than three millions of manufactured goods; we send to America—what between our own manufactured goods and the foreign and colonial produce which we have got for our manufactured goods, and which is therefore just the same—we send to America between 30 and 40 millions of manufactured goods. The advice of these Fair Traders is that we are to endeavour, by hitting America through

these three millions which she sends to us, to make her cease from hitting us through the 30 and odd millions we are sending to her. It is impossible, gentlemen, to conceive that absurdity can farther go. But there is more than this in the pleadings of many of the advocates of this system. It calls itself a Fair Trade League : it is a League for the most unfair trade I ever heard of. It has got unfairness as a birth-sin attached to it. The Fair Traders recommend different things to different people. To manufacturers they say : We recommend a duty upon manufactures, we do not recommend a duty upon foreign corn. But when they go to the farmer, they say they recommend a duty upon foreign corn, because they know very well that the farmer would justly object to pay an extra price upon labour saved by contrivances imported from America, unless you offered him duty upon corn. And so Mr. Eeroyd, or Mr. Protection, argues in his paper that the duty upon foreign corn won't raise the price of corn in England. If it does not raise the price of corn in England, how is it to benefit the British farmer? I have got a recommendation for the National Fair Trade League. When they speak to the producer no farmer is to listen ; and when they speak to the farmer no producer is to know ; and upon these terms it appears to me that the National Fair Trade League may perhaps contrive for a time, and until it is found out, to drive a tolerable business. But it is not easy to fulfil this condition in this country ; for, unfortunately, there are people who will tell producers what the Fair Trade League is saying to the farmer, and will tell the farmer what it is saying to the producer.

“A VERY SERIOUS QUESTION INDEED.”

I have been detaining you upon what, on the field of pure argument, I consider is hollow delusion, which will not bear investigation for one moment. But there is a great deal more than pure argument in the matter. What I want to know is this : whether Fair Trade, or Protection is again to become a subject of national conflict between the parties of this country ; and that is a very serious question indeed. For remember, gentlemen, what has formerly taken place. A quarter of a century of the legislative life of this country was spent without reserve on the solution of this great economical problem. From 1837 or 1838, when the first great battle on the Corn Law took place in the House of Commons and when the Anti-Corn Law League was founded, down to 1861, which was signalised by what I well know to have been a most difficult operation—the repeal of the paper duty—these five-and-twenty years were one succession of conflicts, which had for their whole aim the solution of this great problem. It was nearly a generation of the life of the nation we gave to it—almost everything else was cast aside. Review the legislation of those years, and you will find little except this one memorable, conspicuous, I would almost say incomparable, triumph. A triumph more beneficent—more beneficent either to the material or moral interests of man—I believe never was attained by public virtue and by public intelligence. But now we are told that Free Trade is an admitted failure, and I want to know, gentlemen, what the Tory party are going to do in this matter. I mean, as far as it depends upon me, to drive home the question. The leader of the Tory party in the House

of Commons has, as I have said, been making frequent speeches in the country. In one of these speeches he held the precise language of the Fair Trade League. He said: "I am a Free Trader, but then I am for universal Free Trade." Exactly the language of the Fair Trade League. He went on to another place, and spoke a column of a newspaper on the subject, but I defy anyone to make out its meaning. Gentlemen, this is a very serious affair. One of his followers, one of his Privy Counsellors, one of his colleagues, has won a seat in Lincolnshire by telling the farmers of Lincolnshire that he is for a 5s. duty on corn. I hold the words of the speech in my hand, and Mr. Lowther's election, you know, is held out as one of the conspicuous proofs that the people of England have changed their mind. Mr. Lowther has announced a 5s. duty on corn. Sir Stafford Northcote is speaking all over the land, and cannot tell us whether he is for a 5s. duty on corn or not. I say we have a right to know; and it is necessary for his character and necessary for the character of his party that we should know; and I will tell you why. Because, in my opinion, it is a painful and humiliating process that we should have to entertain this question at all. It is quite true that several foreign countries within the last few years have been aggravating their tariffs. Shall I tell you why? Because they have national Fair Trade Leagues among them. They have been doing the very thing which a lot of people among you here desire we should do; and they, not having had the same amount of economical education we have had, and not having gone through these tremendous conflicts on this very question which we have had—conflicts of a quarter of a century ago—they have been more acted upon than I hope you will be; and I hope also that this is merely an epidemic mania, and that it will die away.

A 5s. DUTY ON CORN.

At any rate, let us consider what has happened. After our experience in the past it is humiliating, as I have said, that we should have to re-open this question. But how was this question treated by the Tory party before? They turned Sir Robert Peel out of office and smashed his party in 1846. They then said that Protection was necessary to save the country. They fought the general election of 1847 entirely upon that principle. They reconstructed their party upon that principle, and shut out of it everybody except Protectionists. They found it an excellent game, for it carried for them nearly all the counties of England. They kept it up sedulously as long as they were in Opposition. They came into office in 1852, and, gentlemen, what happened then? They then knew they had not a chance if they maintained the doctrine of Protection. For six years they had ruthlessly befooled the farmers of England; and were steeped in pledges over head and ears to restore the Corn Law. But when they came into office in 1852, and found that to be impossible, and when they were compelled, as they were in a minority, to dissolve Parliament, they sent a set of candidates down to the towns who were to be Derbyite Free Traders, and a set of candidates down to the counties who were to be Derbyite Protectionists. And, gentlemen, that is the experiment

which apparently is about to be tried again. Mr. Lowther has to go to North Lincolnshire and promise a 5s. duty on corn to the farmers, and win the seat for the county, and the Tory Press are glorifying themselves upon the change in the general opinion. But when they send their candidates to the towns, then they will be Free Trade candidates. They will look this way and that; they will say aye or no; they will say, black, blue or white. It is a great misfortune to a party that contains many honourable and excellent men that they had to go once through a process such as I have described. I do not think that has ever been the melancholy history of your party; but that the Tory party should go through that process twice, that it should again delude the country by raising the absurd phantom of prosperity to be attained through the adoption of a system which we know to be the sure means of impoverishment, and that it should at the same time seek, when it is convenient, to shirk the question by using vague and general language, and declining to give an intelligible opinion, that indeed would be intolerable.

Well, gentlemen, I think I am entitled to say that we should know what it is that the Tories mean to do upon this subject of Fair Trade. I read this last speech of Sir Stafford Northcote. I really am obliged to say that I may be confusing the one with the other—but in the one before Beverley, at Hull, I think, he dwelt at great length upon this subject. In that speech he said he did not approve of some of the remedies that had been propounded. Which could he not approve of? Did he or did he not approve of the remedy by which Mr. Lowther carried Lincolnshire? If he did, we know where we are. That which carried Lincolnshire will not carry England or Scotland. But if he does not approve of it, then I say, after what was done from 1846 to 1852 by the Tory party, it is time that they should hold intelligible language on this subject. I rejoice to think that as Sir Stafford Northcote has got more speeches to make, he has got the opportunity to tell, reluctantly it may be, whether he is or is not in favour of protective duties for manufactures, and of a 5s. duty on corn.

I think there is one evil we are all agreed about, and an immense evil it is—and that is, as we think, the besotted folly—perhaps that is not a respectful phrase to use about the proceedings of one's opponents; but really, in our judgment, using the word in its abstract sense, that is what we think of the system of laying protective duties on manufactures, whether they are ours or those of anybody else. Sir Stafford Northcote on the one side, and we on the other, have a common purpose in view. In his own convictions he is as instructed and as intelligent a Free Trader as you will find anywhere in the room or out of it. He understands the subject thoroughly, and there is his responsibility. Few of the men behind him understand it. And I say without hesitation that it depends on him, and depends on him perhaps alone, to determine whether this great question—solved after a quarter of a century of struggle—is again to become a national controversy or not. But now let us see. He holds unintelligible language; he palters with the question. Is that the way to get foreign Governments to undo the mischief they have done? We agree that it is a mischief. We want them to

untax our goods. There are two specifics. One specific is to show your consistency and the sincerity of your convictions by adhering to the system which has enormously increased the wealth and trade of the country, and has hardly added less to its power in other respects—to the solidity of its institutions and its moral advancement. Hold steadily by it, and if you believe, if as from experience you know, it is the truth, rely upon it truth will in time make its way. That is one specific. Another specific is that of Fair Trade—to tax foreign manufactures and to lay a 5s. duty on corn. It is a bad and delusive one. But bad as it is, and delusive as it is, it is better than paltering with the question; it is better than standing first on your right leg, and next on your left, knowing not which leg you are standing on. It is better than winking with one eye at the towns and with the other eye at the counties, and contriving that they shall understand you in different senses. Whatever is to be done, that at least is not the way in which we can get foreign countries to untax our manufactures. It may be, I won't say it is, impossible, for nothing is impossible; but let us grant, for argument's sake, to the Fair Trader that it would compel them. I don't believe it would, though. Well, we do not think that we should compel them, but that in the course of time we shall induce them. If we could do it quicker we would most willingly expedite it. But if there is one way surer than another to keep them in the path of mischief it is to exhibit to them a course of feeble double-mindedness; that does not know its own intention, that can find no words to speak an intelligible opinion upon matters which involve most vital interests to the country and the whole condition of the people.

Gentlemen, I have done; I will not detain you longer. I have detained you very long indeed. I may say more, perhaps, upon the drier parts of the question in a smaller audience to-morrow. I have assumed, as I hope, that in this hall we are all convinced that Free Trade is not only not a failure, but that it has been successful beyond our expectation. I will endeavour to give some proof of that by-and-by. What I now say is this—that to talk of this question as a question that can be disposed of by merely taxing foreign manufactures is a thing, in my opinion, perfectly ludicrous; but at any rate it is a subject upon which people ought to have an opinion. We have an opinion upon all questions vitally touching us personally or our national existence. This is a matter that vitally touches national existence, and British citizens, accustomed to an open and free political atmosphere, should know their own minds about it, and those who lead British citizens should, above all others, know their minds about it. I have endeavoured to tell you, I hope pretty intelligibly, my mind about it. I will be no party to unsettling, at its top or at its bottom, one single stone of that noble structure which was reared by the combined efforts of many able men, most of all, perhaps, by those of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright; for which many of us have laboured, for which many of us have suffered, by which the land has prospered, and to which the people of this country have given their solemn and final adhesion.

THE STATE OF IRELAND.

(AT LEEDS, OCTOBER 7, 1881.)

I FEEL as you have felt, Sir, the difficulty of addressing the vast assembly gathered within these walls. I know not whether increasing years may have diminished my power of carrying the utterances of my mouth and of my heart to the hearts of my fellow-countrymen ; but I shall indeed grieve if on this occasion, among all which I have ever had to meet, I should fail in enabling you to listen to and to catch the words which I shall address to you. My first words must be those of cordial and respectful gratitude to the chairman, who has been chosen by your favour to the headship of your great party, and who has invited me and has brought me amongst you ; and who, while apologising for defective description of my political life, in his warm and genuine attachment has gone far beyond any claims that I could, on the ground of justice, have the right to profit by such a description. Gentlemen, allow me to say that in one respect I fear—and that respect purely personal—my visit to Leeds has been a failure. I came here for the purpose of paying an old debt, and such is the reception that you have given me in your streets, in the Town Hall to-day, and now within these walls, that I painfully feel, instead of getting rid of my old debt I have only succeeded in contracting a new one. I am afraid, gentlemen, that I have no other resource than one which I trust will never be required to be made available for any of you, and that is making a piteous appeal to the indulgence of my creditors.

Gentlemen, among the pleasurable embarrassments of this visit has been the abundance with which the various associations and bodies that I have had to meet have made known to me their views on the subjects of interest that now attract the attention of the country—pleasurable as a mark of their confidence, very mixed as regards the state of many of those matters in which you naturally feel so deep an interest. There was one of those subjects largely mentioned to-day ; and now again briefly alluded to in the address of your chairman, and I think I shall best discharge my duty to-night by addressing to you my own most earnest reflections—I mean the subject described by him in the emphatic phrase of “Justice to Ireland”—a great and sacred duty, and one that can never be performed, never justly pursued, without equal justice to England and Scotland. This morning, ladies and gentlemen, I addressed to you in another place a speech turning largely upon questions connected with the politics of our rival parties. This evening I must ask your attention with me to great, even solemn, considerations more connected with matters which are in the highest sense national. The question of the state of Ireland is not, and should not be, a party question. I am afraid that for one moment I must refer to a point of party policy and discipline—it shall be for a moment only.

You are aware that the party opposite to ours has glorified itself within

the last few weeks on its victory in the county of Durham. Let it enjoy all the satisfaction which calm reflection will permit to patriotic citizens in respect to the victory so gained ; but, for my part, I desire no such victories. And I trust that never will it happen that a member of the Liberal party, with such a state of things in Ireland, shall go to his constituents, and meeting the wishes of a few Irish voters who may turn the scale, shall solemnly promise to take out of the hands of the executive Government their chief responsibility, by binding himself, irrespective of all considerations, to vote for the unconditional release of every man whom the responsible Ministers of the Crown, acting on the authority that Parliament has given them, deem it necessary for the peace of the country and for public order to confine. Not another word, Sir, will it be necessary for me to say which has relation to our party divisions ; but I could not pass by the subject to which I have just made a brief and a painful reference.

"ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST ORNAMENTS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY."

I have been challenged by the leader of the Conservative party to speak openly and explicitly on the subject of Ireland, and I will meet the challenge. Sir Stafford Northcote had indeed been anticipated by a person acting with a different view, by one whom I am glad to call, from his mature convictions, one of the brightest ornaments of the Liberal party. I mean Lord Derby. Lord Derby, in a recent essay on the Land Act lately passed, has declared, and in my opinion, has justly declared, that the passing of the Land Act imposes upon the Government new and special obligations with reference to the enforcement of the law and the maintenance of those rights of property and of the public peace which are inseparable from the first idea of freedom, and without which no nation is either worthy to possess freedom or capable of enjoying its blessings. Now, ladies and gentlemen, Ireland is in a great crisis. A few weeks hang over her which, in ancient times, would have been called fateful weeks. The Land Act, which has hitherto been mere writing upon paper, is about to become a living reality ; and upon the reception and working of the Land Act may depend for generations, perhaps for centuries, the condition of Ireland, its happiness and prosperity, or its loss of all rational hopes of progress. I know not what the issue of that crisis is to be, but interested as you are in Irish affairs, and inseparably associated as are these three countries, I will venture to lay before you such considerations as, I think, fairly describe the character of the Irish crisis. -

IMPROVEMENT IN IRELAND.

Gentlemen, you have been, your party has been, for several generations of men, distinguished for its anxiety to promote the redress of Irish grievances, and you know that you are constantly reproached with what is called the failure of your efforts. And far be it from me to say that their success has been complete. But this I will say, that in my mind the man is a coward who despairs of the fate of Ireland. Amongst the scenes that are now, unhappily, being enacted there by certain persons, we may lose sight of the great and unquestionable progress

that has been achieved by that country. It has achieved material progress in a degree most remarkable for a country with little variety of pursuit. I do not believe that there is a labouring population in all Europe—although the condition of the Irish labourer still leaves much to desire—which, in the course of the last twenty years, has made a progress equal to that of the labouring population of Ireland. Let me look at the farming class, which, as you know, may be said almost to constitute the body of the nation, inasmuch as the term is understood in Ireland. Let me look at the indication of their surplus wealth. Forty years ago the deposits in the Irish banks, which are the indication of the amount of their free savings, were about five millions. Some fifteen years later than that I think they had risen to some eleven or twelve millions. There are now of deposits in the Irish banks, which represent almost wholly the honest earnings and savings of Irish farmers, a sum of nearly thirty millions of money. Of course, I don't mean to say that the whole of these are agricultural savings, but an enormous proportion is of agricultural savings, and at any rate you cannot mistake the meaning and the force of the comparison between the thirty millions in round numbers of the present day and the five millions which were in the Irish banks forty years ago. If I am to speak of moral progress in Ireland, I say that it has been remarkable, and it is associated with legal progress in regard to every class of legal offences but one. There is still one painful and grievous exception—the exception of agrarian offences. But, gentlemen, you will freely rejoice when I record this fact, that whereas forty and fifty years ago—fifty years ago, I will say—the whole of the community was a community adverse to the execution of law, and while I think there were then some 14,000 offenders annually committed, the law is now, except as to agrarian offences, as well executed in Ireland as it is in England, and the numbers recorded in our statistical comparisons of criminal offenders have fallen from 14,000 to 3,000. Gentlemen, these are indications of real progress about which there can be no mistake. They are encouragements to us to persevere, to fall back upon that stock of resolution and of patience by which it is that a nation grows great, and when it has grown great, keeps its greatness. We will not be daunted or baffled by difficulties; we will spend every effort and every resource, against whatever opposition, in the accomplishment of a great and noble work.

OPERATION OF THE LAND ACT.

Now, gentlemen, with respect to the Land Act, there is a power brought into operation which I will presently endeavour to describe more particularly, and which I do not hesitate to say is a formidable power. Not only the energies of this Government but the energies of this nation will be taxed, and the energy of everything in Ireland that partakes of loyalty and sound principle will be taxed, to overcome that power, and to secure for the people of Ireland that justice in regard to the use of their land which pretended friends are endeavouring to keep away from them. Now we have many signs of encouragement in this matter. An election a few weeks ago took place in the county of Tyrone. There was a Tory candidate on the ground, and a manifesto,—

couched like the manifesto in Durham, from the same quarter, in terms, I was going to say, of the most violent abuse, but at least the most unsparing abuse of the present Government,—was issued, advising the electors to take care that whatever happened a Liberal should not be returned. The great leader of the anti-British party—the anti-loyal party—failed in the purpose of that manifesto, and a Liberal was returned for the county of Tyrone. The Roman Catholic Bishops in Ireland, as you know, owing in a great degree to the unfortunate circumstances of the country, have been for many generations the habitual and the trusted advisers of the people. They have met in solemn synod, and they earnestly urged upon the people willingly and freely to accept and to make full trial of the Land Act. In some cases many persons belonging to what is termed the Land League have held the very same language, and for that reason it is that I do not like to speak to you, and shall not speak to you, of the Land League as embodying a principle hostile to order and to law in Ireland, because dangerous as that association has proved itself to be, yet I am convinced that it has many members, and perhaps many local branches, who have only had in view the attainment of lawful and reasonable objects; and whose exertions, and the credit of whose names and characters, others are endeavouring to pervert for purposes neither lawful nor reasonable. The Land League in the county of Clare the other day met and declared that the Land Act ought to be freely and gladly accepted—accepted, of course, for the purpose of making a full, impartial trial of the operation of its provisions. I must quote to you a passage from a gentleman well-known in this country some 40 years ago as one of the extremest of Irish patriots—Sir Charles Gavan Duffy—who has since then run through an honourable and lengthened political career in one of our great Australian colonies. He has come back to this country—he has come back full of the same intensely national spirit as that with which he went away. He is not an altered man. And what does he say? He has published a pamphlet, from which I shall venture to extract the following passage. Having described the Land Act, he says :—

“Now, my friends, is not this a measure to be received and gratefully to be utilised to its utmost possibility of good? To me nothing is clearer than that all the productive energy and the generous enthusiasm of our people ought to be immediately directed to this task; that we ought to seize all the points of vantage in that Bill. If I were a bishop, I would write a pastoral: if I were a priest, I would preach a discourse; if I were a journalist, I would make myself heard from the rostrum of that profession; if I could do no better, I would beat a drum, in order to fix the attention of the Irish people on the splendid opportunity they possess to become prosperous and powerful.”

That, gentlemen, is the impartial judgment pronounced upon the Land Act by Irish patriotism of the old school—Irish patriotism, for I am by no means disposed to pledge myself to all the opinions of Sir Charles respecting Ireland. For I believe almost none of us would approve, upon certain points, of that patriotism; but even the narrower and more exclusive it is, the more weight has the conclusion to which he has now arrived, and the more solemn the appeal he has made to his country. I will trouble you, gentlemen, with yet one other citation.

You know that the great evil of Irish agricultural life was practical insecurity of tenure and want of confidence, amounting, in a very great degree, to the effectual discouragement of industry; and what was wanted was the removal of this insecurity of tenure, and the substitution for it of something that would restore the confidence of the Irish people in a reasonable certainty of the possession of their holdings. Well, gentlemen, we have never professed to give, and have not sought to give, effect to any extreme doctrine upon this subject. But we have declared that there ought to be given, and have striven to give, to the Irish agriculturist, the Irish farmer and the cottage tenant, that kind of reasonable security. It is admitted that it has been given by those who know the Land Act. All those in Ireland who write upon the Land Act treat it as an Act which gives a reasonable security to the Irish tenant.

I have quoted Sir Charles Duff. I will now quote a later form of trusted Irish patriotism. I will cite a man who, until his death, not more than some three or four years ago, was the leader of the Irish party in Parliament. I mean Mr. Isaac Butt. What, says Mr. Isaac Butt, ought to be and would be the state of Ireland if we would remove the great and growing evil which had even then been greatly diminished, and which has now, as is well-known, been entirely removed? What was the description he gave of the state of things that would and ought to prevail in Ireland when that aim had been attained? Mr. Butt, in 1866—that was before the Land Act of 1870—Mr. Butt, speaking of a measure that would give effectual security of tenure to the Irish tenant, said:—

“Such a measure would obliterate the traces of the ascendancy of conquest; it would teach the population of Ireland to regard the institutions connected with landed property with a friendly instead of a hostile feeling. It would conciliate them to the law, which they now regard as their enemy, because they know it chiefly as enforcing landlords' rights. Take the great body of the people into partnership with proprietary privileges, and you do more to attach them to the law or the constitution than you could effect by all the political or religious concessions you could make. Other questions engage their feelings or their passions; the land question touches their very existence and their life.”

MR. JOHN DILLON.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, if this be so, you may suppose that we ought to have at least quiet times in Ireland. And now let me do justice to a gentleman whose name is in Ireland respected amongst those who differ most widely from him, and who was lately, under the exercise of the discretion of the Government, confined in prison—Mr. Dillon, the Member for Tipperary. Mr. Dillon is a man of the most extreme opinions upon every question connected with the nationality of Ireland. I am not going to recommend the adoption of his opinions, or to profess any share of sympathy with them; but I am going to point out to you, first of all, that he is a man whom every one acknowledges to be one of most single-minded attachment, devoted attachment, to his country, and to be of a perfect, unswerving integrity. Now, gentlemen, suppose you were like Mr. Dillon, that you believed Ireland was entitled to a complete independent national existence—which, I think, is what he believes—and supposing, while you were prosecuting that end, you

found a measure passed by what they call, some of them, an alien Parliament, granting, with a liberality unknown in the history of landed legislation, privilege and security to the cultivator of the soil, what would you do? Would you, in consequence of your ulterior views, reject that boon? Would you keep men in want who might be in abundance? Would you keep men in insecurity who might enjoy a stable confidence? Would you keep men in a condition of uncertainty as to the future provision for their families, when they might have these means at their command, on account of your ulterior views? No; you would not. You would say you were not justified in intercepting the beneficial action of a measure like the Land Act. And that is what Mr. Dillon—alone, I am sorry to say, among his friends—has done. He has withdrawn himself from the theatre of action in Ireland. He will not give up his extreme national views, but neither will he take upon himself the fearful responsibility of attempting to plunge that country into permanent disorder and chaos by intercepting the operation of the Land Act. I claim Mr. Dillon as an opponent, but as an opponent whom I am glad to honour.

THE DOCTRINE OF PUBLIC PLUNDER.

Now, gentlemen, I have the painful duty of dealing with very different conduct. For nearly the first time in the history of Christendom, a body—a small body—of men have arisen who are not ashamed to preach in Ireland the doctrines of public plunder. I make that charge advisedly in the situation which I hold, and I shall ask you to judge with me whether it is not wrung from me by demonstrative evidence and by the hard necessity of the case. Gentlemen, half a century ago the people of Ireland gave their confidence to Mr. O'Connell, a man of remarkable powers and of opinions not always acceptable to the people of this country. But he was a man with respect to whom it must be said that he had these five characteristics: he always declared his loyalty to the Crown; he always declared his desire for friendly relations with Great Britain; he always declared his respect for property—and he never, so far as I know, by word or act went in contravention of it; he declared his respect for law and human life, and said that no political change—which was a strong thing to say—should be prosecuted at the hazard of its being bought by the shedding of a drop of human blood; and, finally, O'Connell always availed himself of and promoted every measure—whether it were small or great, and however far it might fall short of his views—which tended to promote the happiness of the people of Ireland. That, gentlemen, was the political education of the people of Ireland half a century ago. I must now describe to you, briefly, upon these five points, the political education which they are now receiving. And, gentlemen, the consideration which oppresses me and almost weighs me to the ground at this moment is this, that within a few short weeks—certainly within a few short months—it may have to be decided which of these two forms of political education the people of Ireland will prefer. I take as a representative of the opinions I denounce the name of a gentleman of considerable ability—Mr. Parnell, the member for Cork—a gentleman, I will admit, of considerable ability,

but whose doctrines are not such as really need any considerable ability to recommend them. If you go forth upon a mission to demoralise a people by teaching them to make the property of their neighbours the objects of their covetous desire, it does not require superhuman gifts to find a certain number of followers and adherents for a doctrine such as that.

Do not let it be supposed, gentlemen, that I am going to describe what is sometimes called the Irish party and sometimes called the Home Rule party, or to charge upon that party the doctrines of which I now speak. The majority of Irish members are nominally Home Rulers; but of those nominal Home Rulers no inconsiderable portion—such, for instance, as my respected friend, Mr. Shaw—are men of political association with whom no one of us Liberals ought for a moment to be ashamed. Even of those who won't recognise Mr. Shaw there are many who reject in their inmost souls these doctrines, who have not either the power, or perhaps the courage, to repel as completely as they ought to repel the men who teach what I am going to describe, but who undoubtedly follow with a slow and reluctant pace, and take every opportunity they can to show that reluctance. A handful of men, and only a handful, in Parliament follow Mr. Parnell. I will not call them a party, for they are not entitled to be called a party; but they are gentlemen who make themselves effectively responsible for the new gospel of Irish patriotism. And even with respect to them, so hard it is to understand how far it may be with them a matter of compulsion and how far a matter of will, that I will not attempt to identify them. I will frankly take the case of Mr. Parnell, as exhibiting to you what I mean when I say that the state of things in Ireland is coming to be a question between law on the one hand and sheer lawlessness on the other.

THE FIVE POINTS OF IRISH PATRIOTISM.

And now, gentlemen, I shall go very briefly—and the importance of the subject, I am sure, will justify me in your eyes if I detain you longer—I shall go very briefly over the five points of Irish patriotism as it was known in the time of O'Connell, and as it is now being made known in a very different shape. Mr. O'Connell professed his unconditional and unswerving loyalty to the Crown of England. Mr. Parnell says if the Crown of England is to be the link between the two countries, it must be the only link; but whether it is to be the link at all—I am not now quoting his words—is a matter on which I believe he has given no opinion whatever. O'Connell desired friendly relations with the people of this country—cordial and hearty friendship. What does Mr. Parnell desire? He says the Irish people must make manufactures of their own, in order that they may buy nothing in England. I do not believe him to be a profound political economist, but I would commend to his mind the consideration that it may be rather difficult for the Irish people to provide themselves, by the labour of their own hands, with everything that they now derive from England. He is prepared for that alternative, and he says, "If you cannot make the manufactured articles, you must buy them from foreign countries; but whatever you

do, you must not buy them from England." I say, gentlemen, that I think you will begin to perceive that in the strong language I have used to describe the condition of affairs in Ireland, I am not wholly without justification. Friendship with England was the motto of O'Connell, who, on every occasion, declared his respect for property—and, as far as I know, I believe he consistently maintained it; but what says Mr. Parnell upon that subject? Twelve months ago he told the people of Ireland that they ought to pay, not the rents they had covenanted to pay, but the estimate of Griffith's valuation, which is much below the real value, and in by far the greater number of cases is framed for a different purpose. In fact, this advice amounted to this—that the tenantry were to substitute an arbitrary payment for the standard which had been agreed upon. But Mr. Parnell has not stopped there. Now that the Land Act has passed, and now that he is afraid lest the people of England by their long-continued efforts should win the heart of the whole Irish nation, Mr. Parnell has a new and an enlarged gospel of plunder to proclaim. He says now that, whereas the rental of Ireland is 17 millions of money, the landlord is entitled to nothing but the original value of the land before the spade was put into it; and that the rental he may justly claim is not 17 millions, but possibly about three millions of money. And I ask you, gentlemen, as honest men, not as politicians, not as Liberals, not in any other capacity—I ask you whether it is possible to describe proceedings of that kind in any words more just or accurate than as the promulgation of the gospel of sheer plunder.

The next of the five points was respect for law and human life. On that I think O'Connell was consistent; and I believe he was unimpeachable. Mr. Parnell is somewhat copious in his references to America. He seems to set up America as the true and only friend of Ireland; but in all his references to America he has never found time to utter one word of disapproval or misgiving about what is known as the assassination literature of that country. Not American literature. No; there is not an American who does not scorn it and spurn it and loathe it as you do. But there are, it is sad to say, a knot of Irishmen who are not ashamed to point out, in the press which they maintain, how the ships in Her Majesty's navy ought to be blown into the air—to destroy the power of England by secret treachery, and how gentlemen that they are pleased to select ought to be made the object of the knife of the assassin, and deprived of life because they don't conform to the new Irish gospel. You know there have been some attempts of this kind made in this country. You may have heard of an explosion of dynamite in Salford not very long ago. There was a death of one person in consequence of that explosion. The death of another was expected, but I believe was averted; and Mr. Parnell said that that occurrence in Salford appeared to him to bear the character of a practical joke.

O'CONNELL AND PARNELL CONTRASTED.

Now, gentlemen, I go along point by point, and I come finally to this, that whenever a measure was passed with a good intent for Ireland,

O'Connell accepted that measure, however far short it might fall of what he thought she was entitled to claim. Has the present candidate for the leadership—for I will not call him leader of the people of Ireland; that is just the question that has got to be decided, and is not decided yet—has the candidate for the leadership of the people acted upon that principle? How has he met us during the last Session? With every effort that he could to disparage, to discredit, and, if he could, to destroy the Land Bill. He did not dare to go beyond a certain point. He did not dare to vote against the Bill like a man, because he knew that if he did his own Land Leaguers in Ireland would rise in a body against him. But when the Tories, unfortunately as I think, determined to oppose the Bill on the second reading, and when the life of the Bill was at stake, Mr. Parnell, with thirty of his friends, withdrew from the House, and did the utmost that their courage permitted to destroy the work which we had begun, and to defeat us in our arduous labours. On every occasion the same policy was pursued; and now what does Mr. Parnell do? The people of Ireland, gentlemen, as we believe—and this is just the matter that the next few weeks or months will have to determine—desire, in conformity with the advice of their old patriots, of their Bishops, of their trusted friends, to make a full trial of the Land Act; and if they do make a full trial of that Act, you may rely upon it—it is as certain as human contingencies can be—it will give peace to the country. Peace to the country is exactly the thing which is not the object of Mr. Parnell and his disciples; and therefore, in the prosecution of their policy, the thing which is more than all necessary for them to do is to intercept the action of the Land Act. How do they set about it? Mr. Parnell, with his myrmidons around him in his Land League, goes to Dublin, instructs the people of Ireland that they are not to go into the court which the Parliament of the country has established in order to do them justice—they are not to go into the court until he gives them leave. He says that they are not to go there until he has framed certain test cases, and until he and his brethren of the Land League have taken these test cases into court.

What does he mean by these test cases? I will tell you, gentlemen, what he means. It is perfectly plain. He means to take into court cases of rents which are fair and moderate rents. A court is established to administer equal justice and not to obey the behests of Mr. Parnell. If Mr. Parnell, in the name of test cases, carries before the court moderate and fair rents—of which there are many in Ireland—the court will reject the application, and when the court has rejected the application Mr. Parnell and his train will then tell the Irish people they have been betrayed, that the court is worthless, and that the Land Act ought to meet with their unequivocal denunciation. So he will play his game, and so he will gain his object, if the people of Ireland should listen to his advice. Because, gentlemen, you know as well as I do, that the Parliament of this country is not going to overturn the principles of public order to please any party. And I think you also know that the people of this country in any such question relating to the government of a portion of the Queen's territory, weak as they may be if their cause is unjust, in a just cause are invincible. I am not in any

one of these cases speaking except in the strictest accord with what Mr. Parnell has promulgated as his new creed of Irish patriotism; and I see that among the last of his declarations he has said, "We propose"—you will observe these words—"we propose to test the Land Act, not to use it." Well, but the fair test of an Act is to use it. To use it is what Gavan Duffy so earnestly advises; to use it is what Mr. Dillon would permit; to use it is what the Bishops recommend. "No, you must not use it," says Mr. Parnell; "you must test it"—that is to say, you must apply to it a test which will bring to light the disposition of the count upon the doctrine that has now been promulgated—that the land rental of Ireland, which is stated at 17 millions, is to be reduced to three millions to satisfy the just claims of the people.

THE GREAT SCANDAL AND EVIL OF IRELAND.

Now, gentlemen, I think I am not wrong in stating that this is a case of the utmost gravity. I have spoken very strongly, but I have carefully striven to avoid exaggeration, and I am prepared to be tried upon each and every word that I have used. There is another misfortune of Ireland besides the fact that for the first time in our history these immoral and degrading doctrines are taught by men of education, and men of responsible station, to their social inferiors. And the other unhappy fact is the traditional sluggishness and incapacity of the healthier portions of society in Ireland to do anything whatever for themselves. Why, gentlemen, what would happen in this country if schemes of this kind were to go forth and to become in any degree dangerous to the public peace, and to show their first-fruits in the prevalence of agrarian crime, sometimes accompanied with horrible and disgraceful cruelty, even with loss of life, and if the putting down of that crime through the combination by which it was supported proved to be beyond the utmost exertions of the paid officers of the law? Why, what would happen would be this—that vast multitudes of loyal citizens would array themselves in support and in aid of the officers of the law. But no such thing is heard of, unhappily, in Ireland. I hope there will be a change in that respect. I am sure it is necessary.

I will give you yet one more brief quotation from a friend whom I need not name, but who writes thus upon the condition of Ireland:—

"What is amazing and discouraging is that during the past eighteen months no Irishman in Ireland has lifted up his voice to warn his countrymen or to condemn the rebel faction led by Mr. Parnell; that there has been no meeting of any importance, no movement of any kind, no expression of opinion in support of public law and public order. The upper classes—the landowners—are silent or are refugees, and their power is gone. There is no middle-class there, as there is in England, to step forward to sustain the Government and denounce evil. A general cowardice seems to prevail among all classes who possess property, and Government is expected to preserve peace with no moral force behind it."

That, gentlemen, is the great scandal and evil of Ireland, and until that evil also is removed, the condition of Ireland will not be thoroughly sound or healthy.

THE RESOURCES OF CIVILIZATION.

I am glad to see, gentlemen, opposite my eye, the name of Mr. Forster, and I am further glad that my reference to that name has been the means of evoking this testimony of your admiration and confidence in him. Amidst difficulties which rarely have been equalled, and with the recollection of splendid services personally rendered to the people of Ireland from pure, disinterested, individual philanthropy in the early days of his youth, Mr. Forster represents in Ireland that cause which I hope will triumph. I hope, gentlemen, it will triumph. I have not lost confidence in the people of Ireland. The progress they have made in many points, some of which I recounted to you, is to me a proof that we ought to rely upon them. But they have dangers and temptations and seductions offered to them such as never were before presented to a people, and the trial of their virtue is severe. But, nevertheless, they will have to go through that trial. We have endeavoured to pay to them the debt of justice, and of liberal justice. We have no reason to believe they do not acknowledge it. We wish that they may have the courage to acknowledge it manfully and openly, and to repudiate, as they ought to repudiate, the evil counsels with which it is sought to seduce them from the path of duty and of right, as well as of public law and of public order. We are convinced that the Irish nation desires to take free and full advantage of the Land Act. But Mr. Parnell says: "No, you must wait until I have submitted cases; until I tell you whether the court that Parliament has established can be trusted." Trusted for what? Trusted to reduce what he says is 17 millions a year of property to the three millions which he graciously allows. And when he finds it is not to be trusted for that—and I hope in God, gentlemen, it is not to be trusted for any such purpose—then he will endeavour further to work his will by attempting to procure for the Irish people the repeal of the Act. But in the meantime what says he? That until he has submitted his test cases any farmer who pays his rent is a fool—a dangerous denunciation in Ireland, gentlemen—a dangerous thing to be denounced as a fool by the head, by a man who has made himself the head, of the most violent party in Ireland, and who has offered the greatest temptations to the Irish people. That is no small matter. He desires, gentlemen, to arrest the operation of the Act—to stand, as Aaron stood, between the living and the dead; but to stand there, not as Aaron stood to arrest, but to spread the plague.

These opinions, gentlemen, are called forth by the grave state of the facts; I do not give them to you as anything more, but they are opinions sustained by reference to words and to actions; they all have regard to this great impending crisis in which we depend upon the good sense of the people, and in which we are determined that no force and no fear of force, and no fear of ruin through force, shall, so far as we are concerned, and as it is in our power to decide the question, prevent the Irish people from having the full and the free benefit of the Land Act. But if, when we have that short further experience to which I have referred, it shall then appear that there is still to be fought a final conflict in Ireland, between law on the one side and sheer lawlessness upon the

other ; if the law, purged from defect and from any taint of injustice, is still to be repelled and refused, and the first conditions of political society are to be set at nought, then I say, gentlemen, without hesitation, the resources of civilization against its enemies are not yet exhausted. I shall recognise in full, when the facts are ripe—and their ripeness is approaching—the duty and the responsibility of the Government. I call upon all orders and degrees of men, not in these two kingdoms, but in these three, to support the Government in the discharge of its duty, and in acquitting itself of that responsibility. I, for one, in that state of facts, relying upon my fellow-countrymen in these three nations associated together, have not a doubt of the result.

FREE TRADE AND PROTECTION.

(AT LEEDS, OCTOBER 8, 1881.)

I AM very sensible of the great honour which you have done me to-day in presenting me with this address. It contains, in short compass, allusions to many points of the greatest importance. So far as those embrace the legislative action of the Government, I need not, I think, assure you of our great anxiety to make progress in the direction, and generally in the manner that you desire ; but it is only right that I should call your attention—and, indeed, I must take every opportunity that presents itself of calling the attention of the public at large—to the very serious obstacles that now impede the progress of business in the House of Commons, and to assure you that for the sake of every interest, and for the sake of every measure, it has become a matter of vital importance to consider in what way that great and noble legislative instrument, the House of Commons—itsself the noblest legislative instrument in the world—can be restored to that efficiency which it once possessed, if possible even with an extension and increase of that efficiency. Because, gentlemen, experience has proved that with the progress of time and with the great accumulation of legislative labours of which this century has been the witness, instead of clearing off the call upon us for fresh exertion, the developing wants of an enlarged society continually augment the long catalogue of our arrears, and if we are to deal with them seriously it must be not only by approaching each of them with the instrumental power we now possess, but by attempting some great and effectual improvement in the rules for working the instrument itself.

THE FRENCH COMMERCIAL TREATY.

There is, however, one of these questions to which I will particularly refer—the question of the French Treaty now under negotiation—

through adjourned negotiation, still under negotiation—with the Commissioners in France. I will not anticipate the results of that negotiation. It would be premature. But as to the basis on which the negotiation is conducted you may rely upon it that we are in no doubt or difficulty. We think that we understand the general sentiment of the British public—the commercial public—upon the subject, and our own opinions are in conformity with that sentiment. I, for my part, look back with the deepest interest upon the share that I had in concluding—at least I will not say so much in concluding—but in conducting on this side of the water, and within the walls of Parliament as well as in administration, the proceedings which led to that memorable French Treaty of 1860. It is quite true that that treaty did not produce the whole of the effects that some too sanguine anticipations may possibly have expected from it—that it did not produce a universal smash of protective duties as I wish it had throughout the civilised world. But it did something. It enormously increased the trade between this country and France. It knit more closely than they had ever been knit before the sentiments of goodwill between this country and France. It effectually checked and traversed in the year 1860 tendencies of a very different kind towards needless alarms and panics and tendencies towards convulsion and confusion in Europe. There was no more powerful instrument for confining and controlling those wayward and angry spirits, at that particular crisis, than the Commercial Treaty with France. It produced no inconsiderable effect for a number of years upon the legislation of various European countries, which tended less decisively than we could have desired, but still intelligibly and beneficially, in the direction of freedom of trade.

FREE TRADE IMPREGNABLE.

There has been of late a reaction, as we know, in various countries. The political economy of Germany walks in a direction adverse to ours. But as I have said, and I do not hesitate to repeat it to you, when we observe what notions are abroad in our country, what doctrines are held, what specifics are recommended for the purpose of recovering trade from its partial contraction—I won't say decay, for decayed it has not—but from its partial contraction, I think we cannot very much wonder if the same error have scope and go abroad in other countries and have more influence on the legislation of other countries than, after our large and rich experience, they are likely to have in ours. For although, as this is not a political assembly, I have not the slightest intention to make a political speech to you, yet I may say that I express the firmest and strongest conviction that no Government that can exist in this country will either soon or late pledge its responsibility to any proposals for restoring protective duties. You might as well attempt to overthrow any institution of the country as to overthrow the Free Trade legislation. It is not in vain that a country of this kind, with the opportunities that, thank God, we possess for free deliberation, devotes a quarter of a century of its life towards breaking down its ancient and complicated tariff and making its trade free to all the world. We are not in the habit of undoing our great legislative acts. Foreign observers of the

proceedings of this country find much to criticise, find something to admire, and one of the subjects which they select for admiration is this, that progress in this country, if it be not always rapid, yet is always sure, and that when we have made steps in advance we do not follow them by undoing our own labour and making steps in retreat. And therefore, gentlemen, as regards this legislation, you might as well attempt to overthrow trial by jury; you might as well attempt to overthrow the right of petition or of public meeting; you might as well attempt to tear out of our social and political system any one of the most cherished ideas that Englishmen have inherited from centuries of history, as to upset the Free Trade legislation. Do not suppose that on that account it is my opinion that the strange theories that have now for a moment lifted their heads from their native obscurity into light are matters of small importance, or will do no mischief.

I have spoken on this subject in another place. They may become the subject matter of very serious conflict between parties; they may create and propagate delusion in various quarters and places of the country; they may be made use of for this or that particular view; they may influence this or that election; they may lead to great waste of time, and to a good deal of confusion in the relations of party and politics—all these are evils which I hope we shall be able to obviate and to keep down. But I wish to point out to you that at least, in my firm conviction, there is a limit to these evils, and that the great legislation which marked the lifetime of Sir Robert Peel, of Mr. Cobden, and with which the name of Mr. Bright is inseparably connected—is, in my opinion, resting upon such foundations that nothing can shake it, and that the speeches, and the articles, and the treatises that are now floating about in the atmosphere pass as the wind around the solid structure within whose walls we stand, and have no more effect than the idle breeze has upon the stones of this solid structure.

I ought to say one word more before I pass from this subject. I must say a word upon the subject of the Commercial Treaty with France. I read with great interest the remarks of Sir Stafford Northcote on this subject, and I am bound to say that I think they state the case very fairly. It is a balance of the considerations which we had to take into view. There are great disadvantages attaching to all commercial treaties, and the most serious disadvantage of them all is this, that there is a great tendency—when you are only suggesting to people that they should do what is good for themselves—there is a great tendency to assume the position of requesting them to do something simply because it is good for you. There is a tendency to misrepresent and dislocate, if I may say so, the true idea of commerce, which rests and is founded upon this principle—that in the operations of commerce it is absolutely impossible for a country to do good to itself without at the same time doing good to other people. You may depend upon this, gentlemen—I cannot undertake at this moment to say, though we have good hopes—I will not undertake at this moment to say whether we shall have a treaty with France or not; but upon this you may rely, that much as we value association with France, great as is the political value of a well-concluded commercial negotiation, we do not think it our duty, nor

within the limits of our rights to purchase that political advantage by a sacrifice of the true principles of our commercial relations; and if you have a treaty with France, you may depend upon it that it shall not be, with our assent, taking it all in all, a treaty of retrogression either small or great.

I will not say many words to you about myself. Although I spring from a commercial family, yet when I entered Parliament it was not for a good many years that my mind was turned to economical subjects; in truth, it was not until 1841, when, on the proposal of Sir Robert Peel, I accepted the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade. At that period the Board of Trade was the Department which administered to a great extent the functions, which have since then passed principally into the hands of the Treasury, connected with the fiscal laws of the country. I had inherited, as nearly the whole Conservative party had, and likewise, as you know, no inconsiderable portion of the Liberal party down to that period had inherited, the ideas and traditions of Protection. But when it became my duty in the Board of Trade to apply myself, with the energies of youth which I then possessed, to the consideration of those subjects, I need not say that I found those traditions crumble away rapidly under my feet, and before I had been there twelve months my name had become a by-word, and was quoted in Protectionist assemblies as that of a man who was not to be trusted. It was quite true, gentlemen. Moreover, they found out about the same time that Sir Robert Peel could not be trusted, and not only that, but as we got older and older, and lived on from year to year, the matter got worse and worse, and we became still less worthy of the public confidence on the ground of maintaining any system of Protection. Well, now, gentlemen, as we are in an assembly of no vast numbers, although of great influence and power, and as we are not met upon political or party grounds, just let me call your attention for a few minutes to a subject which I purposely omitted yesterday in my address in a larger room. The main proposition is capable of being considered with the utmost calmness and coolness—whether we have been right, after all, in what we have been doing, or whether a great delusion has passed upon us. And I do this not for your sakes, or for my own, but for the sake of weaker brethren—if I may so venture to call them—who really have, in certain cases and in various classes of the community, embraced, and I have no doubt in perfect good faith, the belief that we have been acting under a delusion, and that Free Trade has been an error and a failure. Fortunately, it does not require to be discussed at any great length, and I think I can go through it without making any outrageous claim upon your patience.

ENGLAND UNDER PROTECTION.

I take the date of 1840 as that of the last year in which the protective system enjoyed perfect peace. In every year after that it was subject to a series of discussions and disturbances, which, in the first place, produced the most grievous effects upon its health; and in the second led to its utter downfall. But before 1840 what was the condition of the country? If I regard the condition of this country as to wealth, I find

that between the beginning of the century and 1840 there was a very large increase of the population, owing to causes partly healthful and partly otherwise, but the wealth of the country increased in a less proportion than the population; and what was much more important than this, it increased in the hands of the class already possessed of wealth, but no share of this increase went to the mass of the people. I am afraid I am correct in saying that if we take the mass of our agricultural population in particular, the history of these years was a history of going from bad to worse, a history of increasing social degradation, a history of absolute want in various degrees, and in many or most of the counties in this country, of the means of decent lodgings, decent clothing, and sufficient feeding, until that great Act, one of the wisest and most important of modern legislation, the new Poor Law Act, was passed in 1834, and with slow and sure operation began to check the more grievous forms of certain mischiefs, but of course without the power of being able to supply the new vital energies which had to be sought in other quarters. That, generally speaking, was our material condition. And what was our moral condition? I well remember on the first occasion of my entering Parliament how we heard from well-intentioned men the sorest and the most just lamentations over the increase of crime under the blessed influence of Protection, and a well-informed author quotes the numbers thus for the crimes committed in England and taken notice of by public justice: that in 1809 they had been 5,350; in 1818 they had swollen, after the Peace, and with the special causes of distress that the Peace and that the unhappy Corn Law brought with them, they had swollen to 14,254; and 1829 they rose to 18,075. That, gentlemen, I give you as an indication of the moral influences attaching to the system of Protection, because I warn and entreat you never to be content to argue the question of free commerce as if it were a material question alone. It is just as strong in its political, in its social, and in its moral aspects as it is in its operation upon the production and increase of wealth.

UNDER FREE TRADE.

That is all I will say to you on the state of things before 1840. Now, let me consider what has happened since 1840. In 1841 the population of this country—the three kingdoms—was twenty-six and a-half millions. In 1881 the population had increased to 35 millions; the increase was eight and a-half millions, or very nearly, and closely enough for my present purpose, an increase of 33 per cent. Now, I will want to compare, first with the increased population the increase of wealth, and though I shall resort to the Income-tax in the first place for this purpose, I shall do it safely, because we all know that, while the wealthy classes have been growing wealthier, the poorer classes have likewise been gradually emerging from their indigence, and that freedom of commerce has showered its benefits over them, speaking generally, with no less liberality and no less efficiency than over the capitalists of this country. The increase of wages in this country has borne, if not a full proportion, yet some proportion, to the increase of capital, and has formed a solid addition to the comforts of the people, such as, at any rate, whether

sufficient or not—and of that I need not speak—is without example in our prior history. Let me look at the progress of wealth as shown by the Income-tax. The income taxable to the Income-Tax in 1842 was 251 millions; in 1880 it was 542 millions. I don't include Ireland in the return. Very large amounts of income had in the meantime, whether wisely or unwisely—and I need not enter on that subject now—been either wholly or partially excluded, and I think that the tax may have lost as much as 40 millions of taxable income in that way. That would make £582,000,000 to compare with £251,000,000. The result of that is, that while the population of the country had grown 33 per cent. the wealth of the country, instead of growing as it had done before at a rate slower than the population, had increased, and, tested by the Income-tax, at the rate of 130 per cent.; and if we were able to exhibit the mass of the income of labour, it is probable that it would have exhibited a growth hardly, if at all, less remarkable. The trade of the country increased by the exports of British produce; and in this increase of exports I need not say the working people have a share perhaps as important even as the capitalist. Where in 1840 they were £51,000,000, in 1880 they were £223,000,000; so that while the population of the country had grown 33 per cent., the export trade of the country had grown at the rate of 340 per cent. As to the savings of the mass of the population—I only quote this as a partial fact of interest, for we have unfortunately no effectual means of exhibiting the subject completely—the savings deposited in savings banks, which had been £24,500,000 in 1840 were £75,500,000 in 1880; and undoubtedly that £75,500,000 was far more representative of the savings of the working classes through the Post Office savings banks in 1880 than the £24,500,000 in 1840 had been representative of the savings of that class.

If I turn to the other side, what was the condition of the country in regard to pauperism and crime? The earliest returns that I have found of the able-bodied paupers of England and Wales gives for 1849 a number of 201,000; and for 1880, with a vastly larger population, a number of 111,000. Still more important than the returns of pauperism is the return of crime, and the persons convicted of crime, who in 1840 had risen to 31,000; in 1881, according to our returns, which may not precisely exhibit the proper state of things—because changes have taken place as between summary and non-summary jurisdiction, but which, upon the whole, will exhibit them—these convictions had sunk from 34,000 to 15,600. I have kept my word in so far that these facts have been presented to you in a brief and summary form. But are they not administrative and conclusive facts? Is it possible for any reasonable man not to be satisfied with figures like these?

“A HIGHLY RESPECTABLE PROFIT OF EVIL.”

As to the reality of our progress, and as to the cause of our progress, I will say another word shortly. Still there are delusions—at least there are uncomfortable dreams to break the rest of some of our fellow-citizens. They are dreadfully afflicted with this excess of imports. In passing I must pay a tribute of respect to one class of Protectionists, and

that is to the gallant men who, under all circumstances, with following or without following, with proof or without proof, and quite irrespective of the possibility of being able to turn the matter to account at elections, stick to their old protective doctrine. I mention that because the subject of the balance of trade irresistibly and rapidly calls to my mind the name and figure of Mr. Newdegate, who has been a consistent, but I must say a highly respectable prophet of evil, and respected for his unswerving integrity, and for the great regard he has often shown for Constitutional principles in connection with this painful subject of the balance of trade. But you are aware by the old doctrine of the balance of trade it is shown we have suffered a loss of 160 millions of money within a comparatively short period—about a generation of man. That is a very heavy loss, and how have we paid for it? Oh, you pay for all that in bullion. Well, but the extraordinary fact is this. Here the balance of trade has been most terribly against us during the last five years. From 1876 to 1880, when the imports—these terrible imports that flown upon us and intimidate us in every port of the country as if they were all meant for dynamite explosions—these imports have been in an excess of £622,000,000 over the exports, and yet the country is not absolutely ruined. But while these £622,000,000 have been imported—and we have certainly had to pay for what we imported—instead of losing the bullion, the imports of bullion have been slightly in excess of the exports. The imports of bullion for these five years have amounted to £147,000,000, and the exports have amounted to £144,000,000, so that besides the £622,000,000 of goods which we have got, we have got £3,000,000 more bullion into the country. But, then, it is said, “Oh, but we have paid for it in securities.” Why, Sir, anyone who goes into the money market will know that the investments of England abroad, varying somewhat from year to year, have been tending rapidly and constantly upwards; and were we here to examine into and analyse the history and meaning of these vast imports, you know very well it would be my duty to point out that no inconsiderable proportion of them represents the dividends and the interest receivable and received by us upon our enormous investments abroad—investments which are valued by the best financial authorities—non-official, but the best private authorities—at about 1,300 millions of money, and the income from which, coming back to us every year, mainly in the shape of imports, cannot be said to be less than 60 millions a year—our income in foreign countries from the surplus of wealth which we have sent out of our country to invest.

So much, gentlemen, for the balance of trade. But still they are not satisfied; and you are taught to believe that the foreign trade of this country is wasting away, and that other countries, owing to their greater wisdom, have none of the inconveniences to contend with that we are obliged to encounter, and are constantly growing in all the elements of prosperity. And the two countries which our misguided brethren select for special admiration are America and France. Well, now, the commerce of France, above all others, requires to be divided when you treat its exports between manufactures and produce, because the exports of its produce go on without any material reference to this protective system.

Our exports, as you know very well, fell seriously between 1873 and 1879. But do you suppose—because we are invited to assume—that the exports of manufactured goods in other countries did not similarly fall? How did France, with its protective system, fare in respect to the decrease of exports? Our exports fell from a high degree to one comparatively much reduced, but not so much reduced as the exports of French manufactures, for the manufactures exported by France in 1849 were £49,000,000 sterling; in 1879 they had sunk to £34,000,000 sterling, and that was a greater diminution measured by percentage than the diminution which took place in this country. So that the existence of the protective system did not in the slightest degree mitigate, but, on the contrary, aggravated a decline in the export of manufactured goods, as it would do in this country if, unhappily, we were to be so unwise—which we never shall be—as to try this deadly experiment.

TRADE IN AMERICA.

Well, now, there is also an idea that America is pursuing a course of profound wisdom in regard to its protective system, and we are told that under the blessed shelter of a system of that kind the tender infancy of trades is cherished, which afterwards, having attained vigour, will go forth into neutral markets and possess the world. Gentlemen, is that true? America has been too long in various degrees a protective country. Have the manufactures of America gone forth and possessed the world? How do they compete with you in those quarters of the world which are, speaking generally, outside the influences of Protection? Gentlemen, to the whole of Asia, to the whole of Africa, and to the whole of Australasia—which, in the main, are outside this question, and may fairly be described in the rough as presenting to us neutral markets, where we meet America without fear or favour, one way or the other—the whole of the exports of the United States of manufactured goods to those countries amount to £4,751,000; while the exports to those same quarters from the United Kingdom were £78,140,000. Gentlemen, the fact is this—America is a young country, with enormous vigour and enormous internal resources. She has committed—I say it, I hope, not with disrespect; I say it with strong and cordial sympathy, but with much regret—she is committing errors of which we set her an example. But from the enormous resources of her home market, the development of which internally is not touched by Protection, she is able to commit those errors with less fatal consequences, with less inconvenient consequences upon her people than we experienced when we committed them; and the enormous development of American resources within, casts almost entirely into the shade the puny character of the export of her manufactures to the neutral markets of the world. And here, gentlemen, I am reminded that I was guilty on a certain occasion of stating in an article—not a political article—that, in my opinion, it was far from improbable that as the volume of the future was unrolled, America, with its vast population and its wonderful resources, and not less with that severe education which, from the high price of labour, America is receiving in the strong necessity of resorting to every description of labour-saving contrivances, and consequent development, not only on a

large scale, but down to the smallest scale of the mechanical genius of the country—on that account, the day may come when that country may claim to possess the commercial primacy of the world. I gave sad offence to many—to many of those who tell you that they are ruined already. They were extremely annoyed and offended on account of this, which was not a positive prediction, but an intimation of a probability. I won't enter into it now. I know that was an offence to the vanity of those who are vain among us. But for my part, gentlemen, I think it one of the most sacred duties of a public man to tell the things which he thinks to be of interest and importance, and which may perhaps convey a salutary warning to his countrymen, whether his countrymen like to hear them or not; and I will say this, that as long as America adheres to the protective system, your commercial primacy is secure. Nothing in the world can wrest it from you while America continues to fetter her own strong hands and arms, and with these fettered arms is content to compete with you, who are free, in neutral markets. And as long as America follows the doctrine of Protection, or as long as America follows the doctrines now known as those of Fair Trade, you are perfectly safe, and you need not allow, any of you, even your lightest slumbers to be disturbed by the fear that America will take from you your commercial primacy.

ENGLAND'S SHARE OF THE TRADE OF THE WORLD.

Now, gentlemen, let us see what is our case with regard to the trade of the world. We in this country—whose life-blood the vampire of Free Trade is insidiously sucking—let us see what share in this little island we have got of the Free Trade of the world. In 1880 our trade with the world amounted to 698 millions in value, the largest, I believe, ever known of imports and exports taken together, and, of course, re-exports as well. In 1873, the year of our largest exports, I believe the total trade represented 682 millions. But I will take our worst year—the year 1879, which was the year the darkness of which called forth all the owls and the bats of the country and sent them croaking abroad in order to disturb us, and if possible to teach us to walk in the ways of another policy—in 1879, it is quite true, the trifling sum of 612 millions was all that passed through our hands in this business of exchange, with a population of 35 millions of people. Well, now, let us compare the trade and population of some other countries. The German Empire, with 40 millions of people, had 371 millions of trade. The United States, with 50 millions of people, had 239 millions of external trade, most of which, or an enormous share of which, you know was owing to our demand for the food and provisions that, thank God, she produces. And while we, with a population of 35 millions, had a trade of 612 millions, these two countries together—two of the most civilised countries in the world, both of them highly protective—had, with a population of 90 millions, a trade of 610 millions; so that, comparing ourselves with these great and intelligent countries, man with man, you have nearly three times the amount of trade there is in their hands. Take, again, three other countries which I take on account of the large figures they present, their high place in the trade of the world. France has 313

millions of trade, with 30 millions of people. Russia has 183 millions of trade, with 80 millions of people. Holland has 116 millions of trade—a good deal of which, as we all know, is transit trade for the supply of the interior parts of the Continent—Holland, I say, has 116 millions of trade, with five millions, say, of people. Here, again, we have a population of 121 millions, with a trade of 612 millions, exactly that which in the disastrous year of 1870 fell to our share with a people of 35 millions.

Now the reason I have quoted these particulars is because I have not yet encountered that which is the favourite plea of our erring brethren—namely, that this is all owing to the railways and the telegraph. You know that is what they say. They say, “We admit there is some increase in trade.” They do admit positively that 450 millions is a larger sum than 51 millions—but it is all owing to the railways and telegraphs; but if it is owing to the railways and telegraphs, why have not the railways and telegraphs carried the trade of the world from our hands to the hands of Germany, America, France, Russia, and Holland, which are full of railways and telegraphs—some of them even fuller than we are? Why are they not pointing to our depression of trade and showing how small our population and trade are—for they are protective countries except Holland—showing how small they are in comparison with theirs, instead of pointing to them in irrefragable figures showing that Free Trade *plus* the railways have done for us ten times more than Protection *plus* railways have done for France, or America, or for Germany, or for any of the rest of the countries.

THE NAVIGATION LAWS.

And, gentlemen, that brings me to the last point that I intend to argue, but really, I have made very little argument. I have not required to make argument, or to wander into the mazes of political economy. Very simple facts and figures, after all not outrageous in their number, have constituted the pith and the substance of the statement I have laid before you. But I am desirous if I can to get rid of this remaining false impression about the railways and the telegraphs, which have done an infinity of good for us; but at the same time I am perhaps entitled to say—because through the medium of one of our most widely circulating monthly magazines, before the cares of office were upon me, I endeavoured to make a very close and careful analysis by comparison of the consequences of railway and telegraphic enterprise on the one side and of commercial legislation in the direction of freedom on the other, and seemed to myself to establish—at any rate no one has contested the argument—the conclusion that, although very much is due to the railways and telegraphs, still more is due to that simple and happy specific of unbinding the arm of British enterprise, which formerly we kept in fetters, and allowing it fair play in the general competition of the world. But I think there is one point yet remaining, which, if possible, affords still clearer demonstration than any that I have quoted, and that is what has happened to our shipping. Now, if we compare what has happened to the shipping of this country with what has happened to shipping elsewhere, then, indeed, the results of the

comparison are remarkable; because, gentlemen, you may remember that when the discussions on the repeal of the Navigation Laws arose, it was contended, and contended with some truth—I felt it myself, for one—that the pressure of foreign protective and prohibitory laws upon our shipping is much severer than upon our goods, inasmuch as it often happens, for example, that the law of commerce requiring a cargo to be sent to a certain port in a British ship in free competition with a ship of the country to which that port belongs, that that same law would require, if human law permitted, that the next voyage should be from that port to some other port to which the law of the country does not permit the British ship to go at all, and from which it is excluded by an absolute prohibition, while its own ship is allowed to go to it. However, I need not enter into these details. It is admitted that in no case could competition be more severe. I believe in no case could it be so severe as in the case of the competition of British ships with foreign ships. Consequently, on the occasion of the repeal of the Navigation Laws, the whole Protectionist party of the country went into the deepest mourning, and they said in solemn tones—for they rose to higher flights than usual—and said it represented not Protection only but patriotism, a word of which we have heard a good deal on some more recent occasions. They told us that the repeal of the Navigation Laws was the destruction of the wooden walls of old England, and meant neither more nor less, according to the favourite phrase, than her reduction to the rank of a third-rate Power. All you who are old enough—and I am happy to think some of you are not old enough—will recollect the appalling vaccinations which went forth “thick as the leaves in Vallombrosa” over the whole of the country. But the result has been where the competition was the sharpest there the prosperity has been the most extraordinary—I might say, had it not been realised, in fact almost incredible. The tonnage of Great Britain in 1840 was 6,490,000 tons. That tonnage had risen in 1880 to 41,348,000 tons, or was multiplied more than sixfold.

Now, that is an enormous result, and that is a result not due to railways, because the railways do not run over the sea. It is due to British energy working without any other advantage than that. And it is a serious advantage, especially in certain states of the world. It may be that we have become the home of the shipbuilding trade of the world. But as between nation and nation, that is a very small matter. The shipbuilder of the Clyde will build a ship for a man in Havre on the same terms as he will build a ship for a man in Hull, and it will cost him as much to send the ship round to Hull as it will for him to send it round to Havre. Therefore, there is no factitious advantage to account for this astonishing result.

But I have got something to explain that in my mind is most satisfactory, although it might be taken on the other side of the objection. I do not at all mean to say that our ships are more than six times the bulk in 1880 than they were in 1840. Not at all. They are nothing of the kind. The reports that I have given to you are the reports founded upon clearances inward and outward. They are the measures of the actual tonnage employed in doing actual work. It is quite true we

have not got six times the capital involved in the fabrics of ships. What does that mean? What will be your reply? So much the better. With the smaller capital involved you are doing a greater work. We are doing six times the work and six times the amount of tonnage, because of the employment of steam, of larger vessels, and of better machinery on board, but with nothing approaching an increase of six times the number of seamen, and doing the work, moreover, which six times the number of seamen alone could, under the old methods of navigation, have pursued, and that is not owing to railways; that is owing to the effect of freedom, combined with the remarkable advantages which have been gained by changing from wooden to iron shipbuilding in the conduct of the commerce of the world.

EFFECTS OF FREE TRADE ON SHIPPING.

And now, gentlemen, what is the state of the case with regard to protected countries? There is a great bugbear that is continually paraded before us—the bugbear of the United States. And what has become of the shipping of the United States, and what has become of that shipping in its competition with British shipping? That shipping competes with British shipping not only upon equal but upon favoured terms, for this reason—when a British ship goes from hence to America, goes from hence, say, to New York, to Boston, or to New Orleans, and then has got to make its next step, it has not got a free choice of the ports of the world. It cannot sail round upon what the Americans call the coasting trade, round Cape Horn to San Francisco. The British ship cannot, but the American ship may, consequently the British ship carrying cargo to America has a smaller choice, and, therefore, a restricted advantage. I only say that to show you that there is an inequality of law in the competition which is entirely against the British ships, and in favour of American ships. Gentlemen, my boyhood was spent at the mouth of the Mersey, and in those days I used to see those beautiful American liners, the packets between New York and Liverpool, which then conducted the bulk and the pick of the trade between the two countries. The Americans were deemed to be so entirely superior to us in shipbuilding and navigation that they had four-fifths of the whole trade between the two countries in their hands, and that four-fifths was the best of the trade; and but the dregs were left in comparison to the one-fifth, the British shipping that entered into it. What is the case now when Free Trade has operated, and has applied its stimulus to the intelligence of England, and when on the other hand the action of the Americans has been restrained by the enactment, the enhancement, and the tightening of the protective system? The case is now that the scales are exactly reversed, and instead of America doing four-fifths, and that the best, we do four-fifths of the business, and that the best, and the Americans pick up, if I may say so, the leavings of the British and transact the residue of the trade. Not because they are inferior to us in anything; it would be a fatal error to suppose it; not because they have less intelligence, or because they have less perseverance. They are your descendants; they are your kinsmen; and they are fully equal to you in all that goes to make human energy and power, but they

are labouring under the delusion from which you yourselves have but recently escaped, and in which some misguided fellow-citizens seek again to entangle you. In 1850—I think I am right in saying that in 1850 the relative percentages of America and England in the sea trade of the world were represented by 15 for America and 41 for England. In the sea trade of the world, in 1880, the 41 of England had grown to 49, and the 15 of America had dwindled down to 6. There, gentlemen, are the genuine effects of a protective system exhibited before you, mitigated in the case of America by its own internal energies, and the enormous field that is open to them—a field which in your case you would not find, were you unhappily disposed to follow America in her errors. And the last word I will say to you is this, in the way of statistical statement: of the whole sea trade of the world, the 35,000,000 inhabiting these islands possess 52 per cent., more than one-half of the entire sea trade carried on by the entire human race, civilised or uncivilised. And yet so unthankful are we for the blessings we enjoy, and so unmindful of the dangers we have escaped, and the damages we have long suffered, that there are still many who go to British constituencies to invite them deliberately to march back from light into darkness, people who vainly and idly persuade themselves that if they are only sufficiently diligent and persevering they will convert their country to those pernicious notions.

Gentlemen, I have now fully satisfied what I think my duty on this matter in addressing to you a discourse that I admit, so far as you are concerned, is frivolous. It has been uninteresting to you. You knew it all before. I could tell you nothing you did not know. But some are not in the same happy condition. I hope that I have kept faithfully to the promise that I made that I should endeavour not to give a tinge of party to the discussion on which I have entered to-day, which yesterday I felt myself compelled to do. I hope I have faithfully observed that pledge; and I shall conclude by expressing my belief that every man in this room sees the force of these facts and figures, however curtly and imperfectly stated, and my firm conviction that the people of this nation have now come to understand and to value the system of commercial freedom, and that they will maintain those beneficent and philanthropic and most fruitful laws as among the solid and permanent institutions of the country, fraught with blessings to every order of this community and to all the nations of the world.

THE WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT.

(AT LEEDS, OCTOBER 8, 1831.)

I HAVE seen many remarkable sights since I came to Leeds. In this hall last night I saw and partook of a splendid banquet. It was a noble sight. In the streets of Leeds, in a long procession of two miles, I saw one nobler still : a population, in which your vast town was reinforced from the neighbourhoods around in hundreds and thousands welcomed me as we passed along the line. And never in my life have I seen in so immense an assemblage, so remarkable, so singular a combination of an unbounded enthusiasm with the most perfect respect for order, and with a total abstinence at every point of our progress of anything and everything which could offend. But, gentlemen, to-day I witness a sight more remarkable and more acceptable still. I am now for the first time brought into contact, face to face, and within the walls of this building—which has been the scene of many a great discussion and noble triumph—I am brought here for the first time, into contact with the masses of those teeming thousands who, 18 months ago, chose me to be the Member for Leeds. And so, gentlemen, in a brief, rough, and imperfect manner, my desire is, so far as your patience, sorely tried by the numbers in which you have met, and so far as my own limited power will permit, to render to you this day, and thus far, some account of the stewardship which you honoured me by conferring upon me.

The period of 18 months which has elapsed since the election has been one of great interest, and in many respects of great anxiety. I will not now refer to matters that I have fully discussed before other audiences in the town of Leeds, but I will endeavour, by way of general survey, to give you some such idea of our proceedings as may suffice to shew you that we have not been unfaithful to our trust, and that, surrounded by a body of the most honourable and most able colleagues that ever were associated in the service of the Crown and people—some of whom are upon this platform at this moment—I have endeavoured to labour, with their aid, earnestly in your cause. Gentlemen, with respect to Ireland I will only say one word. We have looked to what is called coercion in Ireland not with satisfaction, not with levity, but as a mournful necessity, which it has been the duty of Parliament to employ, exactly as in other cases we are compelled to put in motion the powers of the State for the purpose of maintaining public order and the rights of private life against evil-doers. But it is not to force, it is to remedial legislation that we look with hope; and of that remedial legislation I will only say that we are determined to adopt every measure that may be found to be necessary in order to secure to the people of Ireland the fullest benefits from those beneficent labours which Parliament has this year so freely bestowed in their behalf.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE.

Now, gentlemen, it has been remarked in some gatherings of the opposite party that we have not effected an economy in the public expenditure. Certainly, gentlemen, it is true; and I told the country before the election—when I did not know who would succeed to power—I publicly proclaimed, before the dissolution of Parliament, that it was impossible for some time that there could be economy. You know well, gentlemen, that in the case of every extravagant man he not only spends a great deal of money, but he contracts a great deal of liability; and it is rather too much that we should be reproached for having failed to effect a reduction of the public expenditure, when we have been compelled to ask from Parliament millions of money for the purpose of meeting the very difficulties and of paying the liabilities of honour and of duty, not to say interest, which our predecessors were kind enough to bequeath to us. But, gentlemen, besides the evil of a vast expenditure, which it was not in our power at once to contract, we found another evil staring us in the face, and that was the evil of successive deficiencies in the public revenue as compared with the expenditure. Now you will agree with me that whether our expenditure be small or whether it be large, we ought to pay our way, and at least we have done this; we have been able thus far to substitute equilibrium and even surplus for deficiency, and we have done that without adding to the taxation of the country. On the contrary, I believe that the changes and the adjustments which we have introduced into finance have done more to relieve those who pay the taxes than to impose charges upon them.

THE TREATY OF BERLIN.

But, gentlemen, before the election a very large share of the attention and interest of the nation was attracted by the policy which had been pursued abroad, and by embarrassments growing out of that policy. The Treaty of Berlin had contained stipulations, not due, I am sorry to say, to the beneficent action of the Government of this country, but still stipulations which, although injured in many points and restricted through British agency, yet were beneficial and important to the subject races of Eastern Europe. To the heroic people of Montenegro the Treaty of Berlin provided for an accession of territory; but when we came into office no practical progress had been made towards handing over to them territory in accordance with that treaty. We, gentlemen, did not scruple to determine that we would use the whole influence and power of this Empire in concert with the rest of Europe for the purpose of securing the fulfilment of that treaty; and that gallant people, after a struggle of 400 years, whom we found with little and faint hope of the execution of the provisions that had been made, are now, I am happy to say, in possession of a territory which they had a right to claim; and to you, men of Leeds, I am able to say that by your conduct at the last election you helped your brethren in their great necessity towards the attainment of that reasonable end. Not only the people of Montenegro, but the people of Greece had had given to them

expectations of great advantage. Advantage in what? Not the advantage of an alien domination to be established over people with whom they had no sympathy, but the advantage of reunion with their brethren in blood and in religion, for centuries subjected to the yoke of servitude, but then panting with the hope and relying upon the just expectation of at length obtaining relief. And now, gentlemen, what has happened? I rejoice to say that though no progress whatever had been made 18 months ago in the fulfilment of that purpose, a country famous in history, the country of Thessaly, inhabited from end to end by members of the Greek race, to which in old times we have owed so much—that country of Thessaly has been handed out of servitude into freedom, by the influence exerted by the Powers of Europe, to which you have contributed your full share. And never, gentlemen, in the course of my life have I enjoyed a purer pleasure than in witnessing the accomplishment of that work, the removal of that yoke, the re-establishment of that union among Greek populations of different regions, without the effusion of one single drop of blood. Nor will I omit to give to the Sultan of Turkey just credit for having freely concurred during the present year in that transition—a transition not quite accomplished yet at every point but so nearly accomplished that I may venture to speak of it as being substantially as a thing that has reached its consummation. But, gentlemen, I am bound, on the other hand, to say that the Sultan and the Government of Turkey know very well upon all occasions with whom they have to deal, and when they are aware that those with whom they are dealing are in earnest, and mean a thing to be done, they can be just as reasonable as other people, a reasonableness that they have exhibited upon the present occasion. And you, the men of Leeds, have helped them in the work.

AFGHANISTAN.

Well, gentlemen, I go to other regions. I go a region inhabited by another gallant people, the people of Afghanistan. That people, if they were united to us in the bonds of affection, would form a moral barrier—supposing a barrier were needed—for our Empire in India against the power of Russia and against her aggressions; and for my part I have more faith in moral barriers than I have either in guns and rifles, or in mountains and rivers—it would have formed a moral barrier on our behalf and for the defence of our great Empire in India and our fulfilment of the sacred and the noble trust which we have there undertaken, not inferior, to say the least, to the barrier which Nature has created for us, and which, happily, the folly of man cannot destroy. The wisdom of successive Viceroys of India—most of them appointed by Liberal Governments, but one of them, and not the least worthy amongst them, appointed by our opponents—I mean Lord Mayo—a succession of wise Viceroys had endeavoured, by carefully respecting the rights of the Afghans, by avoiding every occasion of jealous interference with their affairs, by meeting their wishes in a friendly spirit, by endeavouring to efface unhappy recollections of our former follies—I fear I might say crimes—to create by degrees a kindly feeling between those millions of gallant mountaineers and the administrators of the British Empire, and

I may say of representatives of British power. Well, gentlemen, about three years ago all the work of that wise policy was ruthlessly reversed. Again we invaded Afghanistan; again we established our troops in every stronghold of the country. Again we shed the blood of their people freely—aye, too freely—over its mountains and its vales, and with that blood no small portion of the blood of the gallant soldiers of the British and the Indian Empires. And, gentlemen, for what purpose did we do it?—with what effect did we do it? Simply with the effect of converting into enemies those who ought to be our best friends—and of destroying the moral barrier between ourselves and the Russian Empire. Ah, gentlemen, painful and sad is the confession which that gallant General, Sir Frederick Roberts, has left upon record when, in one of his despatches, he told the Government to which he wrote: “You must found all your measures on the recollection and conviction of the unquestionable fact that you are the objects of the bitter and determined hatred of every Afghan.”

And so, gentlemen, we were invited—and without our own concurrence, without the previous knowledge of Parliament, far less of the people—we were not only invited but compelled to send 70,000 men into Afghanistan, or to the North-West frontier of India, for this insane and criminal purpose. One of the first and weightiest duties we found imposed upon us was to consider in what way, with due regard to the safety of the troops and the safety of all those who might have acted as our partisans, we could retrieve and draw back from a fatal position which a former Government had caused us to assume. I rejoice to say that, in great part, that work is achieved, and that those thousands, with the exception of those in one slight and outlying corner of the territory under peculiar circumstances, are withdrawn, and that the Afghan is again the master of his own country. If he does not quite know whom to obey, that is not his fault, but ours. We broke down his Government. We brought down the grey hairs of the old man who peacefully ruled in Afghanistan in sorrow to the grave. We said, through the mouth of Tory Ministers, that we wished Afghanistan to be one, to be independent, and to be powerful. We made it, instead of one, a collection of fragments; instead of independent, we made it enslaved; instead of powerful, we reduced it to misery and to weakness. Gentlemen, we have made at the last the first stage in retracing those fatal steps, and we have hoped that by a steady perseverance in a similar policy we may at least efface some of the most unhappy, some of the most scandalous recollections which, I am afraid, will remain inscribed upon the page of history—happily with many good works on the other side—remain to sully the fair fame of England.

EGYPT.

Gentlemen, there is another country with regard to which anxiety prevails, and with regard to which I can speak, I rejoice to say, in a different tone of the proceedings of the Government that went before us—I mean the country of Egypt. In Egypt, as you are perhaps aware, joint action of England and France is established, which, of course, is open to a good deal of difficulty and a good deal of

objection. The risks of it we are now beginning to experience; but, at the same time, I rejoice to say, and I am glad that those who went before us should have the full credit of their act, that intervention of England and France has been beneficial to the people of Egypt. I have no doubt that not only the finance of Egypt, which was in confusion, has been brought to order, but that the peasantry of Egypt, an easily governed, well-conducted peasantry, have had a great mitigation introduced through European interference into what was a system of serious and grievous oppression. Now, gentlemen, with regard to Egypt I will not say more than this, that our policy in that country will be guided by the considerations which, as I rather think, you will approve. We shall endeavour to act in strict concert with the allied and friendly Government of France, and we have not the least reason to doubt, from all that has hitherto taken place, that we shall be able there to maintain a thoroughly united action. We shall endeavour to prevent the growth of any difficulties between Egypt and the Sultan of Turkey, and in that aim, I trust and I hope, we shall also succeed. We shall not, unless it be under some unforeseen necessity, seek to extend the limits of our interference, because, gentlemen, in every country what we wish earnestly is this, that its affairs shall be managed so far as may be by the free action and judgment of the inhabitants themselves. But in all that we do there we shall proceed, not for dynastic purposes, not for selfish views, not, gentlemen—I will fairly tell you—by any endeavour to make your interests paramount in the Government of Egypt as compared with the interests of the Egyptian people, but by striving to secure those ends which are for the benefit of the country, knowing as we do that we shall thereby best meet your wishes, best establish and confirm the character of this Empire in the civilised world, and best minister to the ultimate and real promotion of all its own highest interests.

SOUTH AFRICA.

I wish, gentlemen, that I could in the topic I am now approaching—and it is the last on which I shall have seriously to detain you—I could continue those tones of satisfaction with which I record the good results of the policy of the late Government in Egypt. But I must now pass to the affairs of South Africa. And there, gentlemen, when we acceded to power, what did we find? We found that a bloody war with the Zulu nation was just concluded with heavy charge and with a great effusion of blood to ourselves, with the painful recollection—I am sorry to say, so far as our convictions are concerned—that that war was a causeless war, and being a causeless war, left upon us, as is left upon all who make causeless wars, the trace and the stain of bloodguiltiness. We found another war proceeding between a native race, the Basutos, and the Government of the Cape. We found a greater difficulty still—for that Basuto war has happily been brought to a close—in the condition of things that had been established by the late proceedings in the territory known as the Transvaal. A free population of a race not less tenacious than our own, of abundant courage and resolution, united in a form of Republican Government, had by this gratuitous interference of

the British Government, been annexed, as it was called, to the British Empire. This, gentlemen, was to us a source of great difficulty. The assurances sent to us from every official quarter in South Africa were that since the annexation had taken place the Dutch population were rapidly becoming reconciled to it, and that when they knew it would be maintained, and that they would be fairly treated under it, all difficulties would disappear.

It was impossible for us, gentlemen, to ascertain in a day the real state of things. It was our duty to avoid, wherever we could avoid it, the disturbance of the great acts of policy performed by our predecessors. But, as you know, the Dutch population almost unanimously rose in arms to vindicate its freedom and its independence, and when that had taken place we said we were willing to proceed with them in peaceful modes, but that we could not allow the affairs of that or any country for which we had become responsible to be settled by the action of mere force. The leaders of the Dutch replied that they were willing—so confident were they of the goodness of their cause—that a Commission should be appointed by the Crown to inquire into the facts, and they expressed the utmost confidence that the Boers would abide by the result of the deliberations of that Commission. Gentlemen, we thought that a reasonable offer. In the meantime unfortunate military operations had been attempted with insufficient means, and blood had been shed without the attainment of success. There were those who said that we ought to have avenged those consequences of our own miscalculations upon the Boers before proceeding to negotiate with them. Such, gentlemen, was not our conviction. We thought that to act upon such a course would be to act on a principle of shame both false and cowardly. We had provided ample means for vindicating the authority of the Crown, and having provided that sufficient force we determined at once to enter, on the invitation of the Boers, on friendly negotiations.

You are aware that very able men, able commanders and able negotiators on the part of the Boers, concurred with our Commissioners in framing a Convention. Under that Convention we felt it our duty to take the best securities in our power for the welfare of those native tribes, counted by hundreds of thousands, who inhabited the Transvaal and towards whom we could not forget the responsibilities we had assumed. We provided that power should be retained for that purpose. We provided that the Crown should retain prerogatives, under the name of suzerainty for the purpose of preventing the introduction of foreign embarrassments into South Africa, and we consented freely that subject to these conditions and to certain minor conditions in relation to money matters with which I need not trouble you, the Boers of the Transvaal should in all other respects enjoy perfect self-government and practical freedom and independence. We had the assurance of those who had led the Boers to military success, and of those who were the trusted agents for the guardianship of their civil interests, that the representative assembly, which is called the Volksraad, would agree to these conditions. The Volksraad has met; it has debated the conditions; objections have been raised; no motion adverse to the Convention has been made; but down to the present moment its ratification has not

taken place, and requests have been made to us that we will reopen the consideration of subjects which we believed had been closed.

I must now speak to you in free, but I trust clear, words. There might in that Convention be points capable of amendment ; there may be matters of detail and trivial matters, and of those I do not speak. When we come to obtain the light of experience, it may be found that on one point or another amended provision might be made, and it is only from experience that such light can be obtained. We have great duties to perform. We made large concessions, and you know how we have been censured and vituperated for those concessions ; you know, and now, perhaps, you can understand with how little cause it was that we were assailed in Parliament, and that it has been sought to drive us from office on account of the liberal terms which we granted to the Boers. You may now, perhaps, better understand that what we attempted was to do equal justice, and in attempting to grant that justice to the Dutch populations which we thought our predecessors had withheld, we never for a moment forgot what was due to other considerations, to the rights of the native tribes, and to the general peace of South Africa. And, gentlemen, those men are mistaken, if such there be, who judge that our liberal concessions were the effect of weakness or timidity, and who think because we granted much, it was only to encourage them to ask for more. I know not, gentlemen, what is to happen. I hope the Convention may shortly be ratified. But this I can tell you, that as we have not been afraid of reproach at home, as we have not been afraid of calumny in the Colonies, on account of the over-indulgence which, as was said, we extended to the Boers of the Transvaal, so in what may yet remain to be done we shall recollect, and faithfully maintain, the interests of the numerous and extended native population, and we shall be not less faithful to the dignity of this great Empire in the conduct of all our proceedings.

OPPOSED TO IMPERIALISM BUT DEVOTED TO THE EMPIRE.

I have only, gentlemen, a few words to say. It is a common reproach against us, the Liberals of England, that we are indifferent to the greatness of the Empire. One thing I will say : I hope the Liberals of England will never seek to consolidate the Empire by ministering to the interests of class instead of the public. And I hope they will never seek to extend the Empire by either violently wresting, or fraudulently obtaining the territories of other people. We are supposed by many to be the enemies of Turkey, because we have endeavoured to exact from her what we thought was just. But I tell you plainly it is my belief that the Sultan of Turkey has a confidence in us that he had not in our predecessors, because he knows right well that we do not want to establish our single power of interference and disturbance between him and his subjects, but only to proceed in these matters by the general approval of Europe, and the civilised world ; and because he also knows that we do not want to appropriate any more of those islands which form an important part of his dominion. But, gentlemen, while I accord to our political opponents the full credit of a conscientious desire to maintain the glory of this Empire, I will say that if there is to be a

controversy upon the subject, if we are called to descend into the arena, and to argue the matter here or elsewhere, I say it is Liberal, and not Conservative policy which has made England respected, and has made England strong. Why, gentlemen, if the old Tory policy of governing the Colonies in Downing Street had been maintained where would those Colonies now have been? They would have been by this time groups of independent States. But Liberal policy freely granted to the colonists, in spite of Tory censure, the very same rights that we claim for ourselves in the management of our affairs, and the consequence is that the inhabitants of those Colonies are closely and cordially attached to the name and to the throne of this country, and that perhaps if a day of difficulty and danger should arise—which God forbid—from their affection we may obtain assistance and advantage that compulsion never would have wrung from them, and may find that all portions of the British Empire have one common heart, beating with one common pulsation, and equally devoted to the honour and interests of their common country.

And so it is, gentlemen, with regard to foreign countries. We believe and are sure that the way to make England great in the estimation of foreign countries is to let it be known by every one of them that England desires above all things to be just—and will not seek to impose upon them any laws of action, or any principles for the interpretation of their conduct except those to which she herself submits.

Lastly, gentlemen, as regards the policy at home, though some things are to be tolerated and endured in politics—it is good for us all to tolerate and endure them; but there are some things which, when I hear them, are rather too much—I do think it a little too much when I hear described the great power of England, the industry of England, the trade of England, the wealth of England, the population of England, and when it is said that to all these matters the Liberals are perfectly indifferent, and that the only hope of maintaining them depends upon having a Conservative Government in office. I won't take you again across the seas; but I ask you, what are the proceedings which have made these countries great and strong at home, have increased your population, have multiplied your wealth, have improved your moral condition, have spread education? To whom are those things owing? To greater men and better men than you see before you. Who introduced and carried the Reform Act of 1832? Unless I have read history topsy-turvy, that was not the act of the Tories. It is true that Tory statesmen carried Catholic Emancipation, but they carried it by Liberal votes, in despite of Tories. It is true that a Tory statesman repealed the Corn Laws, but for repealing them he was himself banished—expelled from the Tory ranks, and other Tories, of a different creed, and a different kidney, took his place, renouncing his aid, reviling his name; and these are the Tories that now, by a continuous succession—not the Tories of Sir Robert Peel, and of the Duke of Wellington, but, as I have said, of another origin and another breed altogether—demand your support. The cruel criminal code of England was abolished. That was the work of Liberals, and not of Tories. The scheme of national education was conceived and established—that was the work of Liberals

rather than of Tories. You may go through, gentlemen, the whole list of the beneficial laws by which it is that we have become, instead of a disunited and comparatively feeble, a united and a strong community; and you will find that more than nine-tenths of those laws have been passed by the Liberal party, and that as to the other tenth, where it has been passed by Tories, it has generally been passed by Tories, who, on account of passing them, were disowned by the other Tories.

And so, gentlemen, I say that while we are opposed to Imperialism, we are devoted to the Empire, and we who are now in Government as your agents will, to the best and utmost and latest of our power, whilst studying peace with all the world, endeavour to persuade men into observance of the laws of justice and equality. We shall never forget what is due to the dignity of the throne of Queen Victoria. And neither in east nor west, neither in north nor south, shall it be said truly of us that the concessions which we make are concessions wrung from fear, nor shall there be a doubt of our determination, to the best of our ability, to maintain the laws at home, and the dignity of the Empire throughout the world.

NATIONAL EXPENDITURE.

(IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 6, 1883.)

I THINK that, whatever be the view taken by any member of this House of the motion which is before us, there will be a general admission that the task assumed by my hon. friends has been performed by them with great ability, and although I am very far from being prepared to subscribe to all that both or either of them may have said, there is much in which I heartily concur, and many statements and ideas have proceeded from them which will tend to refresh and invigorate the public mind on this important subject, and to bring into lively and practical operation thoughts which for long periods are apt to lie dormant. I feel, therefore, that it is due alike to them and to the House that I should lose no time in stating to the House the estimate that we form of the motion that has been made, the course which we propose to take, and the nature and extent of the results which we anticipate from it, in case it should be carried.

I will make some very brief observations at the beginning upon two or three remarks which fell from my hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Lawson) who proposed the resolution, in some of which I was personally concerned. My hon. friend appeared to anticipate that, inasmuch as his motion, as he considered, fell under the title of abstract resolution, and as he had frequently

heard objections taken from persons standing at this box to abstract resolutions, he must expect that a similar course would be taken to-day. There is however, a good deal of ambiguity about the use of the phrase abstract resolution. I for my part have often objected to abstract resolutions, but I draw a distinction both according to the circumstances in which they are moved and the subject matter. Very generally it is objectionable to move abstract resolutions on subjects which ought to be put forward by legislation unless they be at once followed by practical proposals. But I make this admission, that with regard to all questions of finance my hon. friend had no course if he were to proceed at all but to proceed by abstract resolution, and no doubt, sir, when objection is taken to abstract resolutions, it is taken upon this ground, that it often happens that, after the declaration of a principle, the House feels that it has done something when it has really done nothing; and allows the subject matter to go to sleep in such a way that the ultimate settlement is not forwarded, but impeded by the very cheap assertion of public faith made by the abstract resolution. But I understand my hon. friend to make this proposal in the sense of pledging the Government to something of a practical character in undertaking a real and close view of the expenditure of the country. My hon. friend said that all in this House were to blame. Both parties were to blame—he generously said he was himself to blame, and he took more upon himself than some of those who sat behind him appeared prepared to accept. But, sir, my hon. friend, in my opinion, will never have done full justice to the case until he recognises this fact, that if there is an indifference to the great question of public expenditure in recent times, that is neither exclusively due to Governments, nor to parties, nor to Parliaments, but to the public of this country also. The nation itself has been far less alive to the subject of economy in the administration of its affairs than used to be the case in former times, and this House so essentially represents the public feeling that it has fallen short in this duty, as it could never have fallen short if there had not been on the part of the public an inadequate appreciation of the subject. My hon. friend urges what took place in 1870 when, as he stated, a Vote of Credit was proposed by me, and he said he was one of the gentlemen who voted against it. If he was one of those gentlemen who voted against it, that, in my opinion, is a clear and sufficient proof that the general sense of the House and of the country lay the other way.

As I have referred to the subject of what took place in 1870, I must demur to the censure bestowed by my hon. friend on the measures of that year. He says that the time when two great military Powers were about to exhaust each other in the efforts of a frightful war was the very time when it would have been perfectly safe for us to hold our hand and to keep down our expenditure. I think my hon. friend's recollection has not served him quite faithfully on this occasion. It was not from any apprehension on account of that war or from an idle idea that it was our duty to interfere in every Continental contest, that the measure was then proposed to the House in reference to our military establishments. It was because in the judgment of the Government and of the country a serious danger appeared to threaten the prosperity of a small but free

neighbour in whose welfare the people of this country feel the deepest interest. It was to make provision, and, as I believe, an effectual though a moderate provision, against danger in that quarter that the measure was proposed to which my hon. friend has referred, and which he says he opposed in a minority of only seven members. I find in the speech of my hon. friend that which I admit is almost absolutely incidental to a speech of such a nature. In discussing and bringing to question the augmentation of public expenditure it is hardly possible that my hon. friend should administer complete justice as between expenditure and the purposes to which it was applied. He says with perfect truth that in 1870-1 considerable augmentations were made in the military estimate; but while I am by no means prejudicing the question whether we have been as strict in military economy as we might have been, I would call upon him to admit that as regards a portion of the increase of charge, we have at all events had value for our money. My hon. friend is one of those who do not approve the military operations of last year, but let him consider the manner in which they were carried into effect, and the promptitude—and promptitude in war means cheapness—with which the whole of those operations were carried through; and my hon. friend must know that if the same circumstances had occurred twenty or thirty years ago, and that if we had had the army and the army establishments of 1853 instead of those of 1882, it would have been impossible for us, in anything like the same space of time or with the same decision and success, to put our hand to the execution of a work which we deemed to be imperative in point of principle, and necessary for the security of the peace of Europe. No doubt the operation proposed by us in 1870-1 was an operation of immense responsibility—I mean the abolition of purchase—but it was one which gave us a truly national army, and I believe the country has recognised that the change was worth what it cost.

My hon. friend will perhaps allow me to refer to the mention he has made of the case of 1857. He states that at that time a resolution of this nature was made in the House of Commons, and that it was made by myself. It is quite true. I thought then, as I think now, that there was good reason why the motion should be made, and why it should be made by myself. It was desirable that it should be made, because the period preceding the Crimean War was the turning point in regard to expenditure, and the reason why I felt it incumbent upon me to make the motion was that as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1853 I had indicated to the House how, on the scale of expenditure which then prevailed, the income-tax might be reduced at an early date. On the scale of expenditure which prevailed in 1857 that appeared to be impossible, and I felt it my duty to bring to issue the question whether the House of Commons desired still to hold out to the country the expectation of reducing the income-tax. My hon. friend has described the Government of 1871 as having at that time abandoned the ideas of economy with which it came into office, and which unquestionably I for one had in 1868 loudly professed before the country. I would point out, however, to my hon. friend that the net amount we spent on the army and

navy in 1873-4 was £22,800,000, which was £1,800,000 lower than the amount spent in 1868-9.

And now I come to the motion of my hon. friend. I at once admit that the check possessed by economical-minded members of Parliament over the proposals of the Government, through motions to be made in Committee of Supply, although it is a valuable and absolutely necessary step, is nevertheless imperfect. It is the only check that can be brought into constant operation, but it is perfectly right that from time to time the House of Commons should raise itself to efforts of a different character, and therefore that motions of this kind should be made. It is, indeed, most desirable that when a motion of this kind is made we should remember that it is a subject not to be trifled with, and that the words of the motion, if we adopt them, are words which carry a meaning. It may not be in our power to assure ourselves of any splendid results, but we ought to feel that if a motion such as this is to be adopted it is a solemn pledge to a serious effort, and that we must not shrink from any anxiety which the endeavour to redeem that pledge may be found to involve. My hon. friend in one portion of his speech quoted some cautionary words of mine about efficiency to which I entirely adhere. He has himself put in his motion a very just and a very judicious limitation. He desires to pledge the House to an expression of its opinion that the present amount of the national expenditure demands the earnest and immediate attention of Her Majesty's Government, with a view of effecting such a reduction as may be consistent with the efficiency of the public service. It is impossible for the Government to object to a motion of that kind. The only question in our mind is whether the occasion of its being proposed is proper. We are not prepared to assert that it is not proper. A considerable interval has passed since the House was invited to make any attempt of this kind. There was, indeed, an attempt of the sort in 1873, but that so soon came to an end, in consequence of and in connection with the termination of the Government that had sanctioned it, that I consider that as hardly entering into the history of the case. I must go back as far as 1847, before we arrive at a period when the House made a serious effort on this subject. The Government, therefore, considering the principle, are prepared to accept the motion of my hon. friend. At the same time, the House must perfectly understand what we anticipate from it. Our acceptance implies that the Government will do its best to make a careful review of the several branches of the public expenditure; but we also look upon the motion and find much of its value in this—that it pledges the House also to take a certain course. I think it means that the House will assist the Government and endeavour to strengthen its hands, and will show a general disposition, not only to discourage, but to rather discountenance whatever efforts may tend in the opposite direction. All that we expect from the House in the event of the adoption of the motion, and there is one mode in which the House is accustomed to act, so important, although I do not venture to announce a positive decision of the Government upon it, yet I wish to mention it—the interference of the House of Commons, not only in the way of checking the items of expenditure, as they are proposed from year to year, but in the way of

general review—as thoroughly constitutional, and as supported amply by precedent in other times; and those times are not exclusively confined to the period of the reformed Parliament. On the contrary, the two occasions which alone I will quote are anterior to the reform of 1832. In 1817 there was a step of this kind taken, and it was followed up by a similar motion in 1819. A committee was appointed under the Government of Lord Liverpool for the purpose of making a general review of the public expenditure. Again, in the year 1828, a similar committee was appointed, and I cannot refer to that period without saying what I think justice demands from me—that although the greatest efforts for economy have been made since the reform of 1832, yet undoubtedly the Government of the Duke of Wellington, I believe, on principle, and from personal convictions of many of its leading members, was, and proved itself in intention—conscientious intention—an economical Government. That was in 1828; and again, in 1847, Lord Russell assented to the appointment of a select committee. I have before me the terms in which those select committees were appointed. I need not trouble the House by reading over the formal references that were made. What I say is that they were large and liberal in their terms, and that they opened up to the full consideration of the House the whole arrangements of the public expenditure, and that the only limitation they imposed was that which my hon. friend has substantially introduced.

I do not at present propose to appoint one committee or more than one committee of this kind, but we consider it our duty to consider that matter very seriously; and if we see a prospect of advantage from the appointment of that committee, then, in a short time, with a general concurrence of opinion—that would be essential—we should make a proposal to that effect. There is one word which I ought to say. If we ask the House to appoint such committee or committees, I need not say that we shall be appointing them at a period when the voting of the estimates has already begun. Therefore, the committee would not be appointed to consider the estimates of the year in particular—they would not be excluded—but upon the expenditure in general. I am very desirous to give my own view of the case in order that there may not go abroad any exaggerated ideas upon the subject.

1840 AND 1852-3.

My right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his excellent speech last night entered upon various comparisons. What I wish to do is to go further back. I want to go back into the economical period of British administration, and I wish to choose for that purpose the year 1840. I do it for several reasons. There can arise here no question between one party and another. The year 1840 like 1852, was a year of Liberal administration. Again, as I have said, it is a year taken from a period of strict notions of economy professed on both sides of the House, and I think the most rigid economist, if he looks back and examines the proceedings of Parliament between 1830 and 1852, will have very little to desire. The Governments never bore hardly on individuals, and they upheld public faith and honour, yet they never

missed an opportunity of providing for the present and prospective reduction of the charges. Therefore, by taking the period of 1840 I take the period most suitable for comparison, and, further, it is the earliest year embraced in those admirable 15 years' summaries by means of which every member of the House has an opportunity of examining in great detail the particulars of public revenue and expenditure. I begin by taking the expenditure of that year and comparing it with that of 1882—83; but the result which appears to arise will be very considerably modified by necessary deductions. In 1840 the gross charge of the country was £53,244,000; in 1882—83 it was £88,906,000 which presents an enormous increase. But a comparison so stated would be most fallacious, and I must try to make it a trustworthy comparison. The first thing to be done is to look to the cost of collection. That is not properly expenditure out of the taxes, but necessary charges. The cost of collection of the public revenue in 1840 was £4,115,000, and the deduction of that sum reduces the gross expenditure to £49,129,000. The cost in 1882 was £8,928,000, and the deduction of that sum reduces the expenditure to £79,978,000. Then, sir, I think it is also convenient that the special war charges of the year should be deducted. They form no part of the general system; in 1840 the special war charges on account of China and Canada were £703,000. In 1882, for the Egyptian War, the special charges were £3,896,000. Applying these figures, we find the expenditure for 1840, £48,426,000, and for 1882, £76,082,000, so that the enormous gap noticed at first becomes a little narrower. Then, sir, it is most important to make another deduction, and that is a deduction for the sum paid in the reduction of the debt. Unfortunately, strictly as the principle of economy was applied in 1840, another principle which I hold to be still more important—namely, the equalisation of the revenue charge—was not tenaciously upheld in that period, and the consequence was that the operations for the reduction of the debt were then conducted upon a very small scale. The amount that went to the reduction of the debt in 1840 was only £531,000. Out of the revenue of the year 1882 the sum applied in reduction of the debt was £7,100,000. I am one of those who hold that in all circumstances the reduction of debt ought to be prosecuted, and whatever authorities may be quoted, and I am aware that some may be quoted, to represent the National Debt as a flea-bite, I close my eyes against the charm of all charmers charm they never so wisely; and I trust that no Government will ever relax in any way its operations in the direction of the reduction of the debt.

It is quite obvious, if we are going to compare the expenditure of two particular periods, that we must not take into account that portion of the expenditure which is merely devoted to relief from obligations; and if we act on this very proper principle we shall find that the expenditure of the year 1840 falls to £47,895,000, and that of 1882 to £68,982,000; we may call them £48,000,000 and £69,000,000 respectively; that is an increase of 44 per cent. But there is one other deduction which has been named to-night that we must also take into account, and that is the enormous grants made in aid of local taxation. On the whole, I was very well satisfied with the manner in which this subject was discussed

by my hon. friend the seconder of the motion, for he admitted that the incidence of local taxation required the amending hand of Parliament, while he pointed out the danger that beset our path in regard to the sources of labour and capital respectively from which the different funds are derived that are available for local and Imperial taxation, and he referred to the effort first made by my right hon. friend the Member for Ripon to establish the proper method of proceeding, which is this : First, fix in your own mind how much a head ought to be given to local taxation, but give it in a proper manner by the allocation of taxes ; give it in a manner which will not take funds derived from labour to be applied to the relief of property. Whatever be done, let it be a straightforward and above-board proceeding, and then, in my opinion, the effect will be on the one hand to secure you against the serious political dangers incident to the present method of making grants in aid, while on the other hand the grants themselves will go further than they now do in relief of the ratepayers. In 1842—I cannot get the amount for 1840 or 1841—the whole amount of local grants was £620,000 ; in fact, the system was then in its infancy ; but in 1882 I believe the amount expended was fully six millions of money—that is to say, it was multiplied nearly tenfold during those 40 years. Deducting these sums again I reduce the expenditure of 1840 to £47,275,000, and that of 1882 to £62,955,000. Now that, I believe, is a fair and trustworthy comparison, and the effect of it is to show that the total increase of charges within that period of forty-two years was £15,608,000, or nearly 34 per cent. I do not say that this is normal or just. My belief is that some portion of this money might have been saved, and I hope that we may be able to save a sensible, if not a large, portion of it ; but while I admit that there is an undeniable increase of about 34 per cent., it may be well to recollect that in Great Britain, during the same period, the population of the country has increased by 65 per cent., and the taxable revenue of the country has increased from £251,000,000 in 1840 to £540,000,000 in 1882, or by about 115 per cent.

That is not stated by me with any other view than the simple purpose of reducing the case to the exact proportions of the truth. I do not in the least degree imply that the question raised by my hon. friend is not very grave and serious. I thank him for the effort he has made, and I promise him that the Government, in accepting his motion, will accept it with the fullest intention to do all they can in furtherance of his purpose ; but I must add that the resources of every Government are limited, and that the real and principal effect of its best exertions must depend on the effective support which it hopes to receive from the vast power and authority of the House of Commons.

THE BRADLAUGH QUESTION.

(IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 26, 1883.)

STRICTLY speaking, it is no part of my duty to do more than follow, as well as I can, the arguments which have been used against this Bill (the Oaths Bill). It appears to me, however, that while the real issue to be dealt with is not a very wide one, the debate has been extraordinarily prolonged by the introduction into it of extraneous matter. The debate has undoubtedly been an animated one. On the other side of the House all that sarcasm and invective can do, especially by assaults upon the Government, involving lengthened details of its iniquitous proceedings, has been called into requisition, I will not say for the purpose, but at all events with the effect of very greatly widening the field of contention, without, I think, having the compensating effect of clearing the judgment of hon. members. The hon. member who has just sat down has made a most temperate speech, and consequently it was much less animated than many other of the speeches that have fallen from hon. members opposite on this question. I may say, however, that I do not defend my noble and learned friend the Lord Chancellor. I leave him subject to the whole weight of the censure which has been pronounced by the hon. member, although, it being an argumentative censure, it might, perhaps, have not been difficult to defend the noble and learned lord. The hon. member has said but two things that really bear upon the question at issue, or which could possibly be held to be in the nature of an argument against the Bill. One is that the petitions show that the voice of the nation is against the Bill, and the other is that by the law at this moment an atheist cannot sit in this House. Of course I do not speak of persons whose opinions are concealed. On that point, then, my contention is exactly the reverse of the hon. member's. I will not say what is the intention of the law, because with that I have nothing to do; but I say that there is no legislative power whatever that can prevent atheists duly elected from sitting in this House. And I think, moreover, that the hon. member himself will see that it was mainly through an accident that the disclosure of his religious opinions effected Mr. Bradlaugh's exclusion from this House. What I am prepared to maintain is this—that even where a man's atheism is notorious, and where it has been published in the newspapers, there is no power, where he has been duly elected, that can exclude him if he chooses—whether well advised or ill advised is not the question—to take the oath.

Many matters have been introduced into this debate, some of which it will be my duty to notice. In the first place, it has been said that this Bill ought to have been mentioned in the Queen's Speech, and the Government have been complained of for not having given it a place in that speech. In my view, however, this was a Bill which ought not to have been mentioned in the Queen's Speech. It is the duty of the Government, before

they advise Her Majesty as to her Speech, to make choice, according to the legislative requirements of the country, of certain measures which they think it is within the power of the House of Commons and the most for the interest of the country to deal with; and they should make this choice upon grounds of broad and general interest. This Bill, however, is one which comes within quite a different category. The noble lord, the Secretary for War, suggested, with perfect truth, I think, that this was not a question to which, upon grounds of legislative urgency, it would have been our duty to give precedence over the multitude of those proposed to be dealt with by the measures indicated in the Queen's Speech. This measure is of a totally different character from those. With regard to it, it was our duty to consider what was the position of the House of Commons, just as last year it became our duty to consider the position of the House with regard to the rules of procedure. We thought that it did appertain both to the dignity of the House of Commons and to the interests of the country that this painful controversy, which has existed for so long, should be brought to a close, and that there should be no longer the temptation which has existed in this House to deal with matters strictly judicial in a temper and with indications not always presenting the best features of the judicial character. We thought that such scenes as have been witnessed here, when the dignity of the House and the directions of the House have had to be supported by physical force, ought not to be repeated, especially when we had reason to believe that increased pain and increased scandal might attend their repetition. It was therefore upon the ground especial to the position of the House of Commons in this matter that we thought that this question was entitled to take precedence of certain other measures, and to be a primary one in reference to the procedure of this House, although it might be secondary in point of dignity as far as the order of legislation was concerned. I may perhaps just remind the House that a precisely similar course to that which we have adopted in this case was followed in 1854. Lord John Russell, who was then the leader of this House on behalf of the Government of Lord Aberdeen, introduced a Bill for altering the Parliamentary Oaths Act, with a view to the further relief of the Roman Catholics and to the general simplification of the oath. That Bill was of much wider scope than the present measure, because it went to recast the law with regard to the duties of hon. members generally, and it corresponded in substance with the Act on the subject that was subsequently passed in 1866, and yet that Bill was never mentioned in the Speech from the Throne in 1854.

I am afraid that after what we have heard from some hon. gentlemen opposite, and especially from the right hon. gentleman the late Home Secretary (Sir R. Cross), I shall make but a dull, unexciting, and uninteresting speech, because I do not intend to accuse anybody of anything. Neither can I refer to all the numerous points in the attack which the right hon. gentleman made upon the Government. I must, however, refer to one single point in that attack. The right hon. gentleman said that our determination to take the retrospective action, which we proposed to include in it in 1880, out of the

Bill was "a despicable trick." Let me explain how that came to pass. In 1880 the law had never been determined on the question of the optional right of the hon. member for Northampton to affirm, and consequently Mr. Bradlaugh had been returned by his constituency without any knowledge on their part that he was precluded from taking his seat in this House. That being so, when we thought it expedient to ask the House to change the existing law, we thought it right also that that change should be made retrospective, so that the constituency which had committed no offence against the known law might not suffer, and that it should be given the benefit of its election. The case now, however, stands on a very different footing, because the law has since been declared, and the constituency has again returned Mr. Bradlaugh, this time with a full knowledge of what the law is, and therefore it is that we do not now ask the House to make the present Bill retrospective in its action. Thus we propose to deal with the warned constituency in a different way from what we should have dealt with the unwarned constituency.* It seems to me an extraordinary thing to say that if the Government upon a full consideration of the different bearings of a point of that kind, sees cause to come to a certain conclusion, it is "a despicable trick." Is the conclusion a right one or a wrong one? The right hon. gentleman will not say the conclusion is a wrong one. I want to know what title he has to characterise it in his moderate language as "a despicable trick." The ground upon which we have made, or propose to make, an alteration in the Bill is the ground which I have stated.

But then it is said you ought not to alter the law for the sake of one person. That is a favourite argument. But it so happens that these laws are commonly altered for the sake of one person. It is in the case of some one person that the question is raised and the matter brought to an issue. Was not the case of O'Connell the case of one person? I say, sir, that upon the parliamentary history of the question there is nothing more clear or better known than this—that it was the election of O'Connell for the county of Clare that brought the Roman Catholic question to an issue. Now the allegation is not that Mr. Bradlaugh had nobody behind him, but that his is the sole case presented. Certainly I must say that this is a curious objection to proceed from the party opposite, because the party opposite has had to deal with the question of the removal of religious disabilities. After having stoutly opposed the admission of Jews to Parliament, upon principles quite as high and for motives quite as conscientious as those upon which they are now acting, when they came into office they introduced a Bill for

* Later in the evening Mr. Gladstone made the following statement:—I wish to make an observation. I stated inaccurately to the House a matter I am anxious to set right. I was under the belief that the Bill introduced by my hon. and learned friend the Attorney-General was introduced before the re-election of Mr. Bradlaugh. I find that it was after his re-election; consequently the only explanation I have to give now in lieu of what I said before is that upon full consideration of the rights of the case we think the Bill ought not to be retrospective, especially as the precedent of Mr. O'Connell and the principles applicable to the case recommend it as our duty to propose a non-retrospective measure.

the relief of the Jews. How does that Bill run? In this precise form. It makes provision for altering the law and rules of this House of Parliament upon the presentation of one person. I will not read the whole clause, but it runs thus: "When it shall appear to either House of Parliament that a person"—a person—"is prevented from taking his seat," by the then condition of the law, "such House may resolve that thenceforth any person" may come in and take his seat, upon the conditions therein specified. So that the fixing of the law was thereby committed to each House, and it was deliberately arranged by the action of a Government representing gentlemen opposite that when one Jew was found to be excluded by the state of the law, as it then was, this House should once for all, if it thought fit, admit that Jew and every other Jew who should apply to be admitted. Now we are asked what is to be done about the peers, about aliens, about felons. I am not sure whether that objection did not proceed from some legal authority. It is said that if we pass this Bill we shall be placed in a difficult position with aliens, felons, and peers. The case of the clergyman I put upon an entirely different footing. It is thought to be a matter of very high duty, or of rigid constitutional principle, to exclude clergymen from this House; but I consider it is a matter exceedingly open to discussion, and to involve no constitutional question at all. With regard to peers (though I am sorry to place peers in such company), aliens and felons, their disqualifications rest upon the intelligible and well-understood principles of the common law of England. But the disqualification of an unbeliever rests upon nothing of the sort. I think my hon. and learned friend the other night distinctly demonstrated that by the common law of England there was no disqualification of this character. It is commonly said that Christianity is part of the common law. But can that statement be taken in the sense that if a man is not a Christian, he is an offender against the common law? That would be an extraordinary mode of applying the principle. But it has been shown that no oath or test of any kind was ever used on the part of this House as a condition precedent to entrance into the House until the reign of Elizabeth; and that when an oath was then introduced it was not introduced in the slightest degree as a religious test. I will show my hon. friend (Mr. Newdegate)—if he will allow me to call him so, and I think, after having sat opposite to him for forty years, I am entitled to use that term—I will show my hon. friend that it is so. My proof is this—that the oath was applied to commoners only, and not to peers; and the Act expressly declares the reason why it was applied to commoners and not to peers. "Because," so ran the Act, "we are otherwise persuaded by sufficient means of the loyalty of the peers."

Therefore it was a simple mode of ascertaining loyalty to the institutions of the country, and not the imposition of a religious disability. That, as a matter of history, was the principle of our law down to the year 1828. If that be so, it will be found perfectly sound doctrine that there is no disqualification of the unbeliever by the common law. You may tell me that it was not then merely a question of admitting atheists to this House, but of permitting them to live. That is true, I think, down to the year 1614. The ancestors of those of us of English blood burned a certain

person for insufficiency of religious belief. But that case was not the case of an atheist, but of an Arian. The fact is, however, that the country gradually adopted the principles of toleration. But where it tolerated it never erected barriers to prevent entrance to this House.

Well, sir, hon. gentlemen opposite say that there are a great many petitions against this Bill, and that the number is much greater against than in favour of the Bill. I think there has been some exaggeration in this matter. The late Home Secretary said that the President of the Wesleyan Conference had expressed himself against the Bill. I understand the fact is directly the contrary. He disclaims having done so, and I have a letter in my hand on the subject. I have received myself a letter, signed by Dr. Kennedy, the hon. secretary of the Three Denominations of Dissenters. The letter says: "I have the honour of forwarding to you a petition of the general body of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenting Ministers in favour of the Bill." I think it is only just to read an additional extract. The writer says: "The personal associations which are at present connected with the question are so painful and offensive to the body which we represent that nothing but a strong sense of duty would have induced them to sign this petition to Parliament." Do you suppose that we feel no pain? Do you suppose that we are unaware how difficult, how all but impracticable, it has become to do what we believe to be strict justice in the face of such associations? If you do not know this, you ought; and if you do know, you should not, from your place in this House, sarcastically deride us and advise us to inscribe on our banner, "Bradlaugh and Blasphemy." I believe that every one of those intending to vote for this Bill feels that it is indeed difficult to do justice under such circumstances; but the difficulty is the measure of the duty and of the honour; and, just as if we were in a jury-box and a prisoner stood before us on a criminal charge, we will put a strong hand of self-restraint upon ourselves, and we will take care that full justice, nothing more and nothing less, shall be awarded to every citizen of England. In these considerations, as I believe and am persuaded, is to be found the reason why so many who feel it their duty to support this Bill have, notwithstanding, shrunk from exposing themselves to the odium so very freely cast upon the supporters of this measure by those who oppose it.

But I am bound to say a little more than that. The people who have subscribed petitions against this Bill are very numerous—I think about four times the number of those who have petitioned in favour of it. I am persuaded that the former have acted under the influence of what are justly called religious instincts. In my opinion, upon broad questions of principle which stand out disentangled from surrounding facts, the immediate instincts and sense of the people are very generally right. But I cannot say that this is a uniform and an unbending rule, and it does undoubtedly sometimes happen that when broad principles are disguised by the incidents of the case, the momentary judgment, the momentary opinion, guided by the instincts of a population, is not a safe guide. If I were to make an exception to the general justice of the instincts of the people—and it is an exception not dishonourable to them—I say I should trust them far

more on questions where their own immediate interests are concerned than on questions where the prepossessions of religion are concerned. The latter is a class of questions on which we must be careful against taking momentary indications of public feeling for our guide. These indications are opposed in many instances to the judgment of mankind. This is no assumption of mine. I would ask those who have studied the history of the year 1829, when the great Act for Roman Catholic emancipation was passed, do they believe that the Act at that moment represented the feelings of the majority of the people of Great Britain? No, sir, it was distinctly against them. It was a combination of the guides of the people, it was the leaders, not on one side, but on both sides, who, superior to the temptation of gathering momentary profit from an appeal to religious prejudice, guided the people, and took upon themselves the responsibility in their capacity as legislators of doing that which they believed and knew to be right, trusting to the people to do them justice and to recognise their motives. If I were to go back further into history I might quote other cases of a gross character, when popular risings under the influence of not untrue, though misguided, religious instincts disgraced the annals of this country. I will give one instance. It will be remembered that about 180 years ago this House and the Legislature passed an Act for the purpose of naturalising the Jews. A great popular movement immediately took place against it. Are you to look back upon that movement and say, "Poor ignorant wretches, what compassion we feel for you?" No, sir; these men, according to the feelings and the knowledge of their day, were acting upon exactly the same principles and under exactly the same impulses as the petitioners of to-day. They thought that to admit a professor of a religion founded upon or absolutely involving a denial of Him who is the Alpha and Omega of our religion—they thought, or at least their instincts told them, that there was in that Act something which tended to impair the Christianity of the country. And there is precisely the same feeling now, if allowance be made for the progress in the political education of the country. It is nothing but the combination of the leaders of parties that can direct aright questions of this kind, where religious prepossessions are involved, where the facts are but very partially known out of doors, and where the people have no means of sounding the difficult legal questions and complicated arguments that puzzle even many members of this House. If these leaders of parties do not see their way to the performance of that duty, or think that their duty lies in an opposite direction, then I, for my part, cannot be surprised that large numbers of people should, under the influence of sentiments which I regard with the highest respect and honour, take an action which I believe is wrong, and which I am convinced is unjust. The other night the right hon. gentleman the late Home Secretary spent more than half an hour by that clock in detailing the guilty conduct of the Government in regard to Mr. Bradlaugh. I did not require that assurance to show that hon. gentlemen opposite were pleased. They showed me on Monday night that they were extremely pleased. They would have been pleased if, instead of half-an-hour, he had taken an hour-and-a-half upon topics so inviting and racy in their character.

The question I humbly put to hon. gentlemen opposite is this: "What in the world has that conduct to do with the matter?" Supposing it were all true, and supposing the Bill were the best Bill upon earth, it ought to pass if the conduct of the Government were ever so bad; and if the Bill is a bad Bill it ought not to pass if the conduct of the Government were ever so good.

Hon. gentlemen opposite seem to ascribe to me a peculiar feeling, of sympathetic enthusiasm in the course we have taken, and they seem to imagine that I am possessed with a missionary zeal in driving forward with all my might the admission of Mr. Bradlaugh into this House. What I wish to point out is that we have rendered no assistance whatever to Mr. Bradlaugh. Did the House of Lords assist Mr. Bradlaugh last week? Did Lord Coleridge assist him yesterday? The House of Lords has no more assisted Mr. Bradlaugh than the two Courts which declared one after another that he had no right to affirm in this House have opposed him. What we have endeavoured to do has been to keep the proceedings of this House within the bounds of law and constitutional order; and it is no secret to you that in our opinion they have not been kept within those bounds, owing to the voice of a majority which required from us a respectful obedience, but which required and was entitled to nothing more. The right hon. gentleman opposite says that I abdicated the position of leader of this House. Sir, if the words are to be used at all, it is not a case of abdication, but of deposition. But I am astonished at the doctrine of the right hon. gentleman. He knows our ground. He knows that we were insisting on what we thought our judicial duty, and yet he affirms that when a view of judicial duty opposite to ours has been taken, we, who had been acting in the name of judicial duty, were to devise the means of giving effect to that opposite view. Well, sir, I repel and repudiate with all my soul that servile proposition. I am willing to part with the place I hold and with the seat I hold, but I am not willing for a moment to give in to such a doctrine. We have endeavoured to support, to the best of our power, the executive authority of the House. That murmur only shows that the facts have not been carefully watched; but as as to taking upon ourselves the responsibility of applying votes of this House, that we believe to involve radical injustice, and that I believe—I repeat for myself without hesitation or scruple—to be such as in the case of any minor authority would be termed illegal; to ask me to make myself the instrument of devising means for carrying such votes into effect, that, sir, is a demand which I utterly reject, and which I hold to be totally unsupported by any fact that has occurred in the best ages of our Parliamentary tradition.

I must say I think it is very strange that these accusations should be brought. It may be that gentlemen opposite have something to bias them towards a particular course, which brings them political profit. I am making no accusation. I only say it may be that they have something to bias them in that direction. But what could we have to bias us in the direction that we have taken? Do you suppose that we are ignorant that in every contested election that has happened since the case of Mr. Bradlaugh came up you have gained votes and we have lost them?

You are perfectly aware of it. We are not less aware of it. But is not some credit to be given to us—we giving you the same under circumstances rather more difficult—for presumptive integrity and purity of motive? Sir, the Liberal party has suffered and is suffering on this account. It is not the first time in its history. It is the old story over again. In every controversy that has arisen about the extension of religious toleration, and about the abatement and removal of disqualifications—in every controversy relating to religious toleration and to religious disabilities, the Liberal party has suffered before, and is now suffering again. And yet it has not been the party which upon the whole has had during the last half century the smallest or the feeblest hold upon the affections and the approval of the people. Who suffered from the Protestantism of their country? It was that party, with valuable aid from individuals, but only from individuals, who forfeited their popularity on that account—it was that party who fought the battle of freedom in the great Roman Catholic controversy, when the name of Protestantism was invoked with quite as great an effect—and when the petitions poured in quite as freely—as the name of Theism is now. Protestantism stood the shock of the Act of 1829. Then came on the battle of Christianity, and the Christianity of the country was said to be sacrificed by the Liberal party. There are gentlemen on the opposite side of the House who seem to have forgotten all that has occurred, and rather to plume themselves on the admission of Jews to Parliament, as if they had not resisted—and with perfect honesty; I make no charge against their honour, and impute no unworthy motive—as if they had not resisted it with quite as much resolution as they are exhibiting on the present occasion. Sir, what I hope is this, that the Liberal party will not be deterred by fear or favour from walking steadily onwards in the path which it believes to be the path of equity and justice. There is no greater honour to a man than to suffer for the sake of what he thinks to be righteous; and there is no greater honour to a party than to suffer in the endeavour to give effect to principles which they believe to be just.

Sir, I have occupied the House all this time on what I consider to be extraneous and collateral matter, but matter which has been introduced largely into every speech we have heard from the other side. Now let us try to get at the heart of the argument on what, after all, is not a very complex subject, but which is an exceedingly interesting one. The business of every man in controversy is to try to find out what is the main, the governing contention of his adversary. I have laboured to find it out, and I think I have probably found it: I hope so. As I read it, the governing contention is this, that the main question for the State is not what religion a man professes, but whether he professes some religion or none. I was in hope of receiving some affirmative testimony to that from the hon. gentlemen opposite, I might dispense with proofs, but I will give them. The right hon. gentleman who led the opposition to this Bill said that this was not a question of difference of religion but was a question between religion and irreligion—between religion and the absence of all religion; and clearly the basis of the right hon. gentleman's speech was that we were to tolerate any belief, but

that we were not to tolerate no belief. I mean by tolerate, admit to the House of Commons. My hon. friend the member for Finsbury, in an able speech, expressed still more clearly similar views. He referred to the ancient controversies, and he said those controversies were all very well; they touched, he said, excrescences, and not the vital substance. Now, sir, I want to examine what is the vital substance and what are the excrescences. My hon. friend went further than this, and used a most apt, appropriate, expressive and still more significant phrase; for he said, "Yes, it is true you admit religions, some of which may go near the precipice, but now you ask us to go over the precipice." Gentlemen opposite cheered that loudly when it was said by my hon. friend behind me; they will not give me a single cheer now. They suspect I am quoting this with some evil intent. The question is, am I quoting them fairly? or is it the fact that some gentlemen have really not considered their attitude towards this Bill except that they mean to oppose whatever is suggested by the Government? However, I know my hon. friend has considered very well what he said when he used the simile about going near the precipice. Now I wish to ascertain what is the value of this main and principal contention? The hon. and learned gentleman, the member for Launceston, held exactly the same language. Adopting a phrase which had fallen from the hon. member for Portsmouth, and which he thought had been unfairly turned and applied, he said he wished that there should be some form of belief or other, some recognition of belief, something of what is called in the world of philosophical discussion a recognition of the supernatural. I believe that is a phrase which goes as near to what hon. gentlemen opposite mean as anything can. That is the main contention of the party opposite, and what I want to know is whether that proposition offers us a good solid standing ground for legislation. Whatever test is applied, the test of the Constitution, the test of civil and political freedom, or above all, the test of religion and reverence for religious feeling—I do not hesitate to say that, confidently as I support this Bill, there is no one ground on which I support it with so much confidence as because of what I think the utter hollowness and falsity of the arguments expressed in the words I have just cited and in the idea at the bottom of these words, and the danger of making them the basis of our constitutional action. Now, sir, what does this contention do? In the first place it evidently violates civil freedom to this extent—that, in the words of Lord Lyndhurst, which are as wide as anything any gentleman on this side could desire, there was to be a total divorce between the question of religious differences and the question of civil privilege and power; that there was to be no religious test, no test whatever applied to a man with respect to the exercise of civil functions except the test of civil capacity and a fulfilment of civil conditions. Those were the words of Lord Lyndhurst, those are the words on which we stand. But it is now proposed to depart from this position, and to say that a certain class, perhaps a very narrow class, is, because it has no religion, to be excepted, and alone to be excepted, from the operation of that great and broad principle. In my opinion it is in the highest degree irrational to lay down a broad principle of that kind, and to stop short, after granting 99-100ths of all

it means, in order to make an invidious exclusion of any handful of persons whom the exception may possibly affect.

Hon. gentlemen may perhaps be startled when I make my next objection to the contention of the opponents of the Bill, which is this, that that contention is highly disparaging to Christianity. Hon. gentlemen opposite invite us to do that which, as a Legislature, we ought never to do—namely, to travel over theological ground; and now, having taken us upon that ground, what is it they tell us? They say this, that you may go any length you please in the denial of religion, provided only you do not reject the name of the Deity. They tear religion into shreds, so to speak, and say that there is one particular shred with which nothing will ever induce them to part. They divide religion into the dispensable and the indispensable, and among that kind which can be dispensed with—I am not now speaking of those who declare, or are admitted under a special law, I am not speaking of Jews or of those who make a declaration, I am speaking solely of those for whom no provision is made except the provision of the oath—they divide, I say, religion into what can and what cannot be dispensed with, and then they find that Christianity can be dispensed with. There is something, however, that cannot be dispensed with. I am not willing, sir, that Christianity, if the appeal is made to us as a Christian Legislature, shall stand in any rank lower than that which is indispensable. I may illustrate what I mean. Suppose a commander has to despatch a small body of men on an expedition, on which it is necessary for them to carry on their backs all that they take with them, the men part with everything that is unnecessary, and take only that which is essential. That is the course that you ask us to take in drawing us upon theological ground; you require us to distinguish between superfluities and necessities, and you tell us that Christianity is one of the superfluities, one of the excrescences, and has nothing to do with the vital substance, the name of the Deity, which is indispensable. I say that the adoption of such a proposition as that, which is in reality at the very root of your contention, is disparaging in the very highest degree to the Christian faith. I pass to another point. My hon. friend the member for Finsbury made a reference to Mr. O'Connell, whom he knew personally. I will not say that I had so intimate a personal knowledge of him as my hon. friend, but when I was a very young man, in the second year of my sitting in Parliament, in the old House, about half a century ago, I heard a speech from Mr. O'Connell, which, though I was then bound by my party allegiance to receive with distrust anything he said, made a deep impression on me and by which I think I have ever since been guided. It is to be found, not in "Hansard," but in a record which for a very few years was more copious even than "Hansard," and went under the name of the "Mirror of Parliament." Mr. O'Connell used these words in a speech on the law of libel:—

"When I see in this country the law allowing men to dispute the doctrine of the Trinity and the Divinity of the Redeemer, I really think if I had no other reason I should be justified in saying that there is nothing beyond that which should be considered worth quarrelling for, or which ought to be made a subject of penal restrictions."

I am convinced that on every religious ground, as well as on every political ground, the true and the wise course is not to deal out religious liberty by halves, quarters, and fractions, but to deal it out entire, and make no distinctions between man and man on the ground of religious difference from one end of the land to the other. But I go a little further in endeavouring to probe this contention which has been put forward by hon. gentlemen opposite, and I want to know is your religious distinction a real distinction at all? I will, for the sake of argument, and for no other purpose whatever, go with you on this dangerous ground of splitting theology into slices, and I ask you where you will draw the line. You draw your line at the point where the abstract denial of God is severed from the abstract admission of the Deity. My proposition is that the line thus drawn is worthless, and that much on your side of the line is as objectionable as the Atheism on the other. If you call upon us to make distinctions, let them, at least, be rational; I do not say let them be Christian distinctions, but let them be rational. I can understand one rational distinction, that you should frame the oath in such a way as to recognise not only the existence of the Deity, but the Providence of the Deity; and man's responsibility to the Deity; and in such a way as to indicate the knowledge in a man's own mind that he must answer to the Deity for what he does, and is able to do. But is that your present rule? No, sir, you know very well that from ancient times there have been sects and schools that have admitted in the abstract as freely as Christians the existence of a Deity, but have held that of practical relations between Him and man there can be none. Many members of this House will recollect the noble and majestic lines—

"Omnis enim per se Divûm natura necesse est
Immortali ævo summa cum pace fruatur,
Sejuncta a nostris rebus, remotaque longe.
Nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,
Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri
Nec bene promeritis capitur nec tangitur irâ."

"Divinity exists"—according to these, I must say, magnificent lines—"in remote and inaccessible recesses; but with us it has no dealing, of us it has no need, with us it has no relation." I do not hesitate to say that the specific evil, the specific form of irreligion, with which in the educated society of this country you have to contend, and with respect to which you ought to be on your guard, is not blank Atheism. That is a rare opinion very seldom met with; but what is frequently met with is that form of opinion which would teach us that, whatever may be beyond the visible things of this world, whatever there be beyond this short span of life, you know and you can know nothing of it, and that it is a bootless undertaking to attempt to establish relations with it. That is the mischief of the age, and that mischief you do not attempt to touch. What is more, you glory in the state of the law that now prevails; you wish to tolerate all differences of religion, you wish to allow every one to enter into your Chamber who admits the existence of the Deity. You would seek to admit Voltaire. That is a specimen of your toleration. Voltaire was not a taciturn foe of Christianity. He

was the author of that painful phrase which goes to the heart of every Christian, and of many a professor of religion who is not a Christian—*cecrasez l'infâme*. And yet that is the state of the law for which you are working up the country to madness, endeavouring to strengthen in the minds of the people the false notion that you have got a real test, a real safeguard, and that Christianity is still safe, with certain unavoidable exceptions, under the protecting wings of the oath, within the walls of this Chamber. And for this you excite a great religious war! I hold that this contention of our opponents is disparaging to religion; it is idle, it is irrational. For if you are to have a religious test at all, a test of Theism, which was what the hon. member for Portsmouth frankly said he wished to adopt, it ought to be a test of a well-ascertained Theism; not a mere abstract idea dwelling in the air and the clouds, but a practical recognition of a Divine governing Power to which we are to account for every thought we conceive, for every word we utter.

I fear I have detained the House too long. But after all that has been said, and after all the flood of accusation and of invective that has been poured out, I have thought it right, at great length and very seriously, to show at all events that we do not decline the battle, and that we are not going to allow it to be said that the interests of religion are to find defenders only on the opposite side of the House. That sincere and conscientious defenders of the interests of religion are to be found there I do not question at this moment; but I do contend with my whole heart and soul that the interests of religion as well as the interests of civil liberty are concerned in the passing of this Bill. My reason for saying that may be given in a very few words. If I were asked to put a construction upon this oath I should probably give it a higher meaning than most gentlemen opposite. It is my opinion that the oath has in it a very large flavour of Christianity. I am well aware that the doctrine of my hon. and learned friend, the Attorney-General, is that there are other forms of positive attestation, recognised by other systems of religion, which may enable the oath to be taken, by the removal of the words, "so help me God" and the substitution of other words, or of some other symbolical act, involving the notion of the Deity and responsibility to the Deity. I do not now refer to cases of that kind, but to cases where the oath is taken in the usual form. Now remember the oath does not consist of spoken words alone. The spoken words are accompanied by the corroborative act of kissing the book, which, according to the intention of the Legislature, ought to import the acceptance of the Divine revelation. There have been other forms in other countries. I do not know whether there is still in Scotland the form of holding up the hand. In Spain, I believe, the form is that of kissing the cross; in Italy, that of laying the hand upon the Gospel. But in this, according to the original intention, there is something which involves the acceptance of Christianity. You do not mean that the law is, or can be, applied in this sense. A law of this kind is like coin spick and span new from the Mint, carrying upon it all its edges in their sharpness and freshness. But it wears down in passing from hand to hand; and, though there is a residuum, yet the distinguishing features disappear. So it is with the oath. Whatever my opinion may be as to

the original vitality of the oath, there is very little difference of opinion as to what it has now become. It has become a theistic test. It does, as I think, involve a reference to Christianity, but while this is my personal opinion, it is not recognised by authority, and, at any rate, does not prevail in practice; for some gentlemen in the other House of Parliament, if not in this also, have written works against the Christian religion, and yet have taken the oath. But undoubtedly it is not good for any of us to force this test so flavoured, or even not so flavoured, upon men who cannot take it with a full and cordial acceptance. It is bad to do it; it is demoralising. It is all very well to say, "Oh, yes, but it is their responsibility." That is not in my view a satisfactory answer. A seat in this House is to an ordinary Englishman in early life, or perhaps, in middle or mature life, when he has reached a position of distinction in his career, the highest prize of his ambition. If you place between him and that prize not only the necessity of conforming to certain civil conditions, but the adoption of certain religious words, and if these words are not justly measured to the conditions of his conscience and convictions, you give him an inducement—nay, I do not go too far when I say—you offer him a bribe to tamper with those convictions, to do violence to his conscience in order that he may not be stigmatised by being shut out from what is held to be the noblest privilege of the English citizen, that of representing his fellow-citizens. Therefore I say that besides our duty to vindicate the principle of civil and religious liberty, it is most important that the House should consider the moral effect of this test. It is—as the hon. member for Portsmouth is neither more nor less than right in saying—a purely theistic test. Viewed as a theistic test, it embraces no acknowledgment of Providence, of Divine Government, of responsibility, or retribution. It involves nothing but a bare and abstract admission, a form void of all practical meaning and concern. This is not a wholesome, but an unwholesome lesson. Yet more. I own, although I am now, perhaps, going to injure myself by bringing the name of Mr. Bradlaugh into this controversy, I am strongly of opinion that the present controversy should come to a close. I have no fear of Atheism in this House. Truth is the expression of the Divine mind, and, however little our feeble vision may be able to discern the means by which God may provide for its preservation, we may leave the matter in His hands, and we may be sure that a firm and courageous application of every principle of equity and of justice is the best method we can adopt for the preservation and influence of truth. And I must painfully record my opinion that grave injury has been done to religion in many minds—not in instructed minds, but in those which are ill-instructed or partially instructed, and which have large claim on our consideration—in consequence of steps which have, unhappily, been taken. Great mischief has been done in many minds through the resistance offered to a man elected by the constituency of Northampton, which a portion of the people believe to be unjust. When they see the profession of religion and the interests of religion ostensibly associated with what they are deeply convinced is injustice, they are led to questions about religion itself, which they see to be associated with injustice. Unbelief attracts a sympathy which it

would not otherwise enjoy, and the upshot is to impair those convictions and that religious faith, the loss of which I believe to be the most inexpressible calamity which can fall either upon a man or upon a nation.

A VOTE OF CENSURE.

(IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 12, 1881.)

MR. SPEAKER, we have lost, but we have also gained, by the unfortunate collapse of the debate last week. The Government lost an opportunity—when a contention had been made of the failure of its efforts in Lower Egypt—of showing that they had not failed. But the House have had this advantage, that the right hon. gentleman (Sir S. Northcote) has been able to make his motion on the basis of authentic papers instead of on newspaper reports. Moreover, they have had this greater advantage, that, after the calamities which have recently happened in Egypt, he has felt that those calamities warrant him doing what last week he did not venture to do—namely, to submit a direct issue to the House. Why, what did he submit last week? He submitted that we could not adequately perform our part in Egypt unless we acknowledged our obligations. We have been doing nothing but acknowledging our obligations in the most solemn form. They have been defined and described three times over in the Speeches from the Throne. There was not a word in the debate of last week to tell us what these obligations were. Everything positive, everything binding was carefully avoided, and the House was invited in the name of a vote of censure to discuss a truism and a platitude. But the right hon. gentleman has now, as I say, plucked up his courage, and has submitted to us a direct issue of adequate force; for in the terms of his motion he calls on us to allege that “the recent lamentable events in the Soudan are due, in great measure, to the vacillating and inconsistent policy pursued by Her Majesty’s Government.” Yes, you are ready to cheer those words, or any words, it matters not what, provided only they are sufficiently condemnatory of Her Majesty’s Ministry. I am delighted with the frank and truly English response which that affirming cheer gives to the sentiment I have indicated. I was not sanguine enough to hope for it. I admit that it was in the nature of a decoy offered to hon. gentlemen, and they took it and cheered it to the echo, when I said it did not matter whether the proposal was this or that, provided it was condemnatory. Now, sir, I put it to the House that there is but one mode in which Her Majesty’s Government can meet the motion. I move no amendment; I meet it with a direct negative. I say, in the first place, there has been no vacillation; there has been no incon-

s tency in the policy of Her Majesty's Government ; and, sir, I say more, that no part of the ingenious argument of the right hon. gentleman has for a moment gone to show that there was either vacillation or inconsistency. I admit that he has condemned our conduct ; but he has not attempted to show that one part of our conduct was inconsistent with another part. He has not shown that we hesitated in the adoption of resolutions when the circumstances were laid before us ; and the propositions in his motion do not derive the smallest support from any argument in his speech. The right hon. gentleman has used arguments in his speech, I admit, but his argument is this, not that we vacillated or flinched—I mean from our own view of the case—not that we were different at one time from what we were at another, but that we adopted a wrong policy ; that we refused to strengthen the Egyptian army for the conquest of the Soudan, that we refused to counsel the Egyptian General in the Soudan, and that we refused to over-ride the Egyptian Government with respect to the Soudan. Sir, these are very serious charges, with which I shall deal, but they have nothing to do with vacillation or inconsistency.

What the right hon. gentleman calls upon the House to vote is, not that we have had a false policy, but that we have been vacillating and inconsistent in the pursuance of our policy ; and, sir, do you suppose for one moment that these strange inconsistencies between the speech and the motion of the right hon. gentleman are due to some accident—that they are due to a want of perception, or want of acuteness on the part of the right hon. gentleman ? No, sir, nothing of the kind ; they are due to this—that if the right hon. gentleman, instead of charging us with vacillation and inconsistency, had plucked up his courage to a higher point, and called upon the House to condemn any particular portion of our policy by a motion, he would himself have been obliged to declare a policy. But while he, forsooth, charges us with flinching from responsibility, he does not dare to put his objections in a form in which they could receive the judgment of the House, because he knows that, if he did, he might bind himself to something, whereas the essence of the whole affair is that he shall bind himself to nothing. I must say that the right hon. gentleman, considering the nature of the case that he had to lay before us, has been very far from extravagant. I have risen somewhat in contravention of my own statement of Parliamentary usage in a case which is a very broad one, at a time, when I am afraid I shall be a loser in a competition which will presently arise in this House between continuing in this House to hear my argument, and the fulfilment of a very much more necessary, if not more legitimate purpose. Whether I am justified in the charge I have just made (and I have made a very distinct charge) that the speech of the right hon. gentleman had nothing whatever to do with his motion, and that he did not venture to put the upshot of his speech into a motion, because it would have bound him to a policy, and he was determined not to bind himself to any policy—whether this be so or not, I say that this debate has a wider interest than the mere issue raised between the two parties. I shall not scruple, as far as my strength permits me, to say to the House all that appears to me of vital importance, in order to

redeem the pledges I have given, to practise no reserve, and to state minutely and particularly those facts that are material to enable the House to judge of our conduct. But I must go beyond that, and say that this debate will have the character of a historical debate. Now for the first time is raised a great issue between parties in this House, but that great issue involves in it something much more important than the victories of Oppositions, or the continuance of Ministries; it involves the development of great and useful lessons with regard to rash and unwise interventions. I will at least take care that I shall be sufficiently explicit in what I have got to say. It is absolutely necessary to go further back than the right hon. gentleman has done, and to present, in what I conceive to be its completeness, the case of the Government.

Sir, the situation in Egypt, with or without the aggravation of the Soudan and the increase of the responsibilities which it has brought, is one of the utmost degree of anomaly and inconvenience, and, in some points of view, perhaps even of political danger. How has this situation come about? Where is the root of the mischief? It is the business of the House to censure the Government if they have gone wrong; but it is the business of the House, as the guardians of the public weal, to search to the very bottom into the causes and origins of great public disaster or of great and serious public inconvenience. Sir, I affirm, and I will show, that the situation in Egypt was not one which we made but one that we found. I shall show that we have an option. I am not prematurely claiming your assent, I am stating what I will show, not what I have shown. I will show that we do not claim those laudations for vigorous initiatives, and the like, which have been sweet perhaps to the ears of others.

We are content to administer the affairs of an Empire of 300 millions, and as far as we can to keep the enormous interests of that fifth or fourth part of the population of this globe within the limits, already wide enough, which history, Providence, and the genius of the country have assigned to them. But, sir, it would not have been in keeping with the propriety of things to reverse the attitude which we found occupied by the British Government in Egypt. We inherited from our predecessors certain engagements—see whether I make good my words or not; from those engagements it has never been in our power honourably to escape. Sir, what the country knows is perhaps not much of this case. They know that there was established in Egypt what was termed the Dual Control. But what was the Dual Control? It was the establishment in the heart and centre of Egyptian government of two great functionaries, the representatives of two of the greatest nations in the world, who held their office in Egypt, and for Egypt, by a tenure independent of the will of Egypt, and dependent altogether upon the will of the two Governments they represented. For what did these two nations go there? The right hon. gentleman can contradict me if I am inaccurate. I say they went there pledged to each other for certain purposes. It was not merely to manage revenues in the interests of the bondholders; it was general control, general advice, general support to the Government of Egypt. The late ruler of Egypt had been displaced, a new ruler had been put upon the throne, by the agency mainly

of the British Government—at any rate, with an essential and at least equal share in the operation. The two Governments had undertaken obligations towards that ruler, and in my opinion those obligations were, when they had once established this extraordinary system, matters strictly and essentially consequential. They could not possibly have put Tewfik on the throne and have declined to support him; and they bound themselves to one another to support him, and to support him earnestly. They bound themselves, likewise, to one another, while those were their obligations to him, to maintain the peculiar and, in a certain sense, exclusive political influence that these two Powers, and these alone, were to exercise in Egypt. Under these circumstances, it was obvious that we were bound to counsel the Khedive to the best of our ability. I do not speak now of the action of the hon. member for Ripon. The right hon. gentleman knows that my remarks have nothing to do with his proceedings in Egypt. They have nothing to do with any of the proceedings of the late Government in the earlier part of its existence. They have to do with the Dual Control established under Lord Salisbury, and my contention is, that when we placed independent officers representative of England and France to hold office in Egypt by a tenure in no way dependent on Egypt, we were bound—indeed, Lord Salisbury has always admitted this—to counsel the Khedive to the best of our ability.

The next contention is, that if we counselled the Khedive to the best of our ability, we were bound by every sentiment of honour to support our counsel by our acts. It is a singular pleasure to me when I find myself in concurrence, as has happened already once or twice, with hon. gentlemen opposite. It has been admitted that, when difficulties arose in the country—such as the difficulties of the year before last—we were bound to give, by the position we occupied, our advice to the Khedive upon all those difficulties; and having given that advice, we were bound to support it by consequent action to such an extent as circumstances might appear to demand, subject, of course, to the judgment of Parliament. I am not in the habit of going back upon statements of my own, but I must say that all these obligations and all the difficulties they involved ought to have been foreseen. I must say that the late Government, when they built up this curious system, did it with their eyes open. They were not unwarned of what would happen. They were not unwarned that the establishment of financial control by a Government must mean political control, and must involve political responsibilities. I hope it will not be an unpardonable breach of manners if, happening to recollect what I myself said upon the subject, I read an extract reported in “*Hansard*” on the 6th of March, 1876, not corrected by me, but expressing with substantial accuracy what I said. This was at the very first beginning of this intervention; and no control such as I now speak of was established for some considerable time, I think three years afterwards. This was the warning I ventured to give:—

“I should, therefore, wish to know whether, if the proposition for the appointment of such a commissioner be entertained, the right hon. gentleman” (that was Lord Beaconsfield) “means the appointment of a Commissioner who would really have such an effective control over all

arrangements and the mode of accounting for these revenues that he could guarantee to us the receipt of the whole, that it might be applied to the purpose in view? If this is what it does mean, it appears to me that we are only shifting the difficulty one step further; because in that case our Commissioner is to take into his hands the administration of a very important portion of the government of Egypt; so that the measures which we may think necessary as a matter of prudence to cover the proposal which we are to consider may entail upon us still greater difficulties and mix us up still further with a heavier responsibility for a portion of the internal government of Egypt. When we have begun with one portion of the internal government of Egypt, we may pass on to another. We may come to occupy the entire ground by a series of degrees not difficult to contemplate; and possibly this may have been in the mind of the right hon. gentleman the other night, when he said that, while the people of this country would view the diminution of the Empire with horror, they would see it increased without dissatisfaction."

Thus, I ventured to point out what I do not think I deserve the smallest credit for pointing out—namely, that these arrangements, then in partial contemplation, afterwards greatly developed and, rigidly enforced, did advance from financial to political, and from political to probably territorial responsibilities. I have no charge of ill-motives to make against the late Government. In my opinion they committed a great error, of which we are now from day to day bearing the burden. I give them every credit for honourable and upright motives. Though I then disapproved of the means, and now, I do not need to say, still more deeply lament these means were resorted to; yet I am fully persuaded that the object which the late Government had in view was to secure a better Government for Egypt. Further, I admit that very considerable practical and administrative advantages were secured for the fellahs by the administration of the revenue; although I am afraid those advantages were far more than counterbalanced in their political importance by our having imported into the country that fatal and most dangerous idea that it was doomed to be placed under foreign domination, and that Egypt was to be governed and maintained for the benefit of persons beyond its borders. The noble lord cheers me, and there is very great truth in what I take to be the meaning of that cheer. He probably thinks that Arabi was one who fought against that foreign domination. That is not my view. I think I could give conclusive proof to the contrary; but of this I do not entertain a doubt, that Arabi was able to give vigour and extension to his motives by appealing to that hatred of foreign domination; and so long as foreign domination continues in Egypt, the danger will recur from time to time. So far, I have said something to show that I do not use idle words, when I allege that the situation which we have now in Egypt was, in its root and origin, far beyond the power of such prosaic people as the present Ministers to conceive. It was due to higher and more venture-some geninnes, such as those who preceded us. There has been no moment at which it was possible for us, consistently with our honour, to retrace our course. And we must look back as well as forward if we want to place before the

English people—the people of the three kingdoms—all the lessons of this great question, which is far greater than the hon. gentleman would lead us to believe.

I have spoken thus far of the situation in Egypt down to the close of the military operations, and I will adopt divisions of time in what I have to say, for the purpose of being more intelligible to the House, and depriving myself of the power of using subterfuge, even if I were (which I trust is not the case) inclined to resort to it. The close of the military operations was, I think, on the 21st of September, 1882—the time of the surrender of Damietta, the battle of Tel-el-Kebir having been fought eight days or something like that before. The right hon. gentleman has placed the pith of his charge during the thirteen months between the surrender of Damietta and the defeat of Hicks Pacha in November, 1883. He is extremely angry with us because in our cowardice—our timidity about responsibility—we did not take enough of responsibility for the Soudan. Well, we had to begin with taking a good deal of responsibility upon us. We had taken the responsibility of military operations. The army was entirely broken up. The institutions of the country were gone. We had before us the work of reconstitution. Our obligation in honour to support the Khedive bound us in our opinion to supply him with the means of defence, and with some primary means of good government. In those thirteen months what was the course we took? We sent to Egypt the very best men of every class and stamp that we could find. From Dufferin to Gordon—from the first to the last, though I might go back to Sir E. Malet, but it would be too long to enumerate the list of able, upright, patriotic men who have been serving the interests of Egypt with our concurrence and authority—but from Dufferin to Gordon, they were men as remarkable for their ability and fitness for their work as any men that have ever been in the political service of the British Crown. I am not going to say, because they were able men they were responsible for what was done, but I am going to say that, at least, by choosing men of that vigour and masculine force of character, and that consummate skill in affairs, we did not take the course which might be taken by those who were undoubtedly anxious to shirk their proper responsibility. We endeavoured to go to the root of the matter, and to put into action all those reforms which it was clearly necessary we should endeavour to make. If we were bound to support the Khedive, we were bound to support him earnestly—and I am sorry to say that the right hon. gentleman has been extremely reticent on that subject—and, if we were bound to support the Khedive earnestly, we were bound to have some regard also for his people; and, if we endeavoured to give security to his throne by the constitution of something like an adequate military force, we were bound also to do what we could in seconding what we not only believed, but what we knew, to be his own good, upright, and patriotic intentions for the government of Egypt and the good of his people. Was nothing done in that period? New tribunals for natives were organised, and I believe I may say that they were at work—at any rate the codes have been for some time completed, and the judges have been appointed. Legislative institutions, hardly, I admit, worthy of that name—they would perhaps

be more accurately called consultative institutions—but intended to give some moderate expression to the national life, have been framed, and the scheme has been carried into execution. Elections have taken place, and the Legislative Council met last November at the very epoch of the disaster to General Hicks' force. It will be remembered what grievances there were with regard to the undue employment of foreigners and the non-taxation of foreigners. With respect to the undue employment of foreigners great efforts have been made, which it may be possible to exhibit more fully in the shape of numerical results at a future stage, largely to cut them down. The non-taxation of foreigners is no easy matter to deal with. It is liable to be met by jealousies in every quarter. However, the actual state of the case is this, that that exceptional and odious practice has been given up of course by us, and not by us alone, but by France, Italy, Germany, and Austria; in truth, I believe I may say by nearly every Power in any way concerned. The land survey, which the right hon. gentleman I think referred to the other night, has been economised, and what is thought a new and better system for conducting it has been introduced. I do not know whether the right hon. gentleman thinks that in our thirteen months of occupation we ought to have completed our land survey; but when I reflect that in the half-century during which I have been a member of this House, I have been accustomed to hear of successive votes for the completion of our national cadastral survey, it does not seem to me that an excessive term has been occupied in this matter in Egypt. A valuable report has been made upon irrigation by Mr. Moncrieff, and I trust great benefit is to be expected from it. With regard to the constabulary and police, the constabulary was organised in what appeared to be an effective form for its purposes under Baker Pacha. The police is certainly under the most efficient handling we could give it, being in the hands of Mr. Clifford Lloyd. I believe, and have been informed, that the prisons have undergone considerable, at all events initial, reforms. I will not refer to sanitary departments and other matters. But there are several very important matters, such as the debts of the fellahs, which have not escaped attention, and a Commission has been appointed for the consideration of that question. The slave traffic to which the right hon. gentleman refers has not been forgotten, and the charge of all measures relating to it has been transferred to what I believe to be the best and most efficient department—namely, the department of the Inspector-General of Constabulary, with an increase of means, and a better system for including the principal routes now under reformation. The only other point I will mention, that is vital to the whole, is, that the army has been organised under the able auspices of Sir Evelyn Wood. All the reports of officers show that its discipline is as high as, indeed higher than, it was possible or reasonable for us to expect. I have only now to say that instead of having failed in carrying forward these institutions, we were justified in advising Her Majesty to declare in the Speech from the Throne that, down to the month of November last, in the execution of this exceedingly heavy and responsible work, she had ample reason to be satisfied with the progress which had been made.

I wish to say two or three words, however, upon the exact position

which we hold in Egypt, for it is material that it should be accurately understood. At one moment the right hon. gentleman cast upon us great re-ponsibility for having shattered the Government of Egypt, which he said it may be impossible to replace with dignity and credit before the people ; but not many sentences before in his speech, he had reproached us with at least equal vigour for not shattering that Government long before.

A PROTECTORATE IN EGYPT.

It will be in the recollection of the House, when I affirm that, again and again, he stated how it was our business to have forced upon the Egyptian Government, much earlier than we did, the adoption of principles and methods of action, to which we have been unhappily compelled to resort. In my opinion, this shattering of the Egyptian Government is a very serious matter indeed. It is an essential portion of our policy to uphold the Egyptian Government with all the credit and dignity we can. We bound ourselves to that, and therefore we do not wish to make any demand upon the Egyptian Government except that which necessity requires. But, sir, as the Power in military occupation of the country, we are after all primarily responsible in those matters which we deem vital to the purpose for which we went there. It is a great mistake to suppose that we have taken out of the hands of the Egyptian Government the whole important administration of the country. We have done nothing of the sort. We have only conveyed to the Egyptian Government at a serious crisis the clear knowledge of this fact, that our military occupation entails upon us the obligation and duty (where we have no doubt as to the right and propriety of the thing to be done or as to its importance) of seeing that, if we are to remain in the country, the course which we recommend shall be adopted. It is true that upon all these vital points we have taken and shall continue to take all the power necessary for our purpose. We do not seek more ; we should think it wrong to take it. We are under engagements earnestly to support the Khedive. We think it would be a most unfortunate policy, were we to show indifference in the matter. We cannot concur with those gentlemen who say we should sweep the Egyptian Government away, and govern the country by English functionaries. I am not willing to undertake a thing which would result in setting up any sentiment adverse to foreign domination ; and, though we will firmly and resolutely go up to the point when necessity calls us, we will not willingly go beyond that point. I must remind the House that the difficult, onerous, and inconvenient—some may think it the almost hopeless—task which we have undertaken, is that, first, of putting down disorder in Egypt, and then of establishing at least some beginnings of tolerable government. The task is also one of considerable delicacy. It is one which we are executing not alone on our own behalf, but on behalf, I may say, of civilised mankind. We undertook it with the approval of the Powers of Europe, the highest and most authentic organ of modern Christian civilisation ; but having undertaken it at their invitation or with their concurrence, we must fulfil it as we received it from them. I know sometimes the word protectorate is

spoken of; if it is not spoken of in its technical sense, and it is only meant by that that we must have full and plenary power to do what our purpose requires in Egypt, I agree with it. But it is a dangerous word, because it has a technical and a legal meaning. I may remind the House that we have ourselves held a protectorate. We had a protectorate over the Ionian Islands, but that protectorate was imposed upon us by the united voice of the Powers of Europe; and even now Austria in Bosnia, having taken over the administration of that province and Herzegovina, has done so by the united voice and invitation of the Powers of Europe. The point is a sullicieney of control, and it is to that, therefore, that we shall look. We conclude it to be absolutely included in the purpose of our mission, and we should go beyond what the purpose required were we to insist on more than that. I may remind the House of an analogy I think worthy of their notice—I mean the analogy of the Indian Protected States. Now, sir, in the case of these States, our power is, I may say, absolute. We are under no restraint of European law. Those States are *enclavis* within our own dominions. Our intervention becomes a matter of absolute practical necessity, but what do we do? We send an agent there and take care that he shall have all the power necessary for efficiency. But we take care also that he shall have no more. We leave in its native vigour and its dignity before the people of those countries the native Administration, which, depend upon it, they love far more than foreign domination. Few, indeed, are the peoples so degraded and so lost to every noble sentiment that it shall be a matter of indifference to them whether they are governed by persons who belong to the same political constitution with themselves, or whether they are governed by those who come from a remote quarter, with foreign instincts, foreign sympathies, and foreign objects. Such was our case in Egypt until we came to the month of November last year.

THE SOUDAN.

Now I pass to the Soudan. And there I will take three periods—first, the period before the defeat of Hicks; next, the period between the defeat of Hicks and the defeat of Baker; and then the period which I admit the House has the right to scrutinise most narrowly, namely, that between the 5th of February, last week and the 12th of February, on which I have the honour of addressing the House. Now I directly traverse the assertion of the right hon. gentleman with regard to the period before the defeat of Hicks Pacha. I have already observed there was not a word of his accusations that bore upon the question of vacillation or inconsistency at all, and I am not now going to discuss his motion at all. I hope, sir, I shall not be called to order, because if I am discussing a matter not contained in the motion before the House, I am bound to say the same objection may be taken to every word of the speech of the right hon. gentleman. Sir, what the right hon. gentleman charged upon us was false policy. I told you why he does not venture to put it into his motion. If he did, he would be bound to show a true policy. What true policy has he shown to-night? What approach to it?—what sketch, what shadow, what outline, what shred or patch to

one? It is all very well to say that what we have done is wrong. But notwithstanding the ingenious efforts of the right hon. gentleman to shirk pointing out to us anything like a policy, there are certain indications which it is difficult for him to efface from critical remark. He says we are greatly responsible for these disasters, that we cannot (and in this I quite concur) escape responsibility by saying we are not responsible, and then came in his simile of the pistol. He never pointed out to us what the pistol was. He did not explain his own parallel, and I suspect it would rather puzzle him to do so. What the right hon. gentleman contended was virtually this—that we ought to have taken into our own hands the business of advising Egypt upon the war. He began by saying that we ought to have seen that Egypt was supplied with such an army of her own as would have carried on the war with effect.

Sir S. NORTHCOTE—I did not say that we ought to have supplied an army.

Mr. GLADSTONE—I am speaking now, not of a British army, but that in our reformatory operations in Egypt we ought to have included the provision of such an army—of such Egyptian army. Now, I affirm most distinctly that we ought not, and that if we had done so we should have undertaken what was impossible, what was unreasonable, what was beyond our position of competency, and what was probably unjust. It is all very well for the right hon. gentleman to point to the smallness of Sir E. Wood's army and to say that a larger army would have been requisite in order to send to General Hicks the supplies which, when unhappily he got into difficulties, he came to want. How were these men to be supplied, sir? Where were the funds to supply them? Is Egypt so rich a country? Egypt is in financial difficulties. Egypt was long ago—when the right hon. gentleman had to do with it himself—in financial difficulties. The financial difficulties were then the excuse for our most unfortunate intervention. But I say that this was impossible, for Egypt had no means to constitute such an army.

Mr. BOURKE—They were obliged.

Mr. GLADSTONE—They found the means of constituting Hicks' army, but that is not the charge; and I hope when the right hon. gentleman interrupts me he will not do so for a purpose of forcing me to circumlocution. The charge is, that it ought to have been a better and more considerable army, able to meet the wants of Hicks when he had undertaken this charge. That is the charge which I traverse by a direct denial, and by saying, in the first place, it was impossible to constitute such an army. Even had it been possible to constitute such an army, when we received from the Powers of Europe our commission with regard to Egypt, we received no such commission with regard to the Soudan.

Sir S. NORTHCOTE—Where is the commission?

Mr. GLADSTONE—The commission is in the records of the Conference at Constantinople, immediately before the operations in Egypt; and I may also say that it was quite sufficiently recited in the speech of the right hon. gentleman to-night, when he spoke of the relations which the Powers of Europe had assumed towards the work we had in Egypt. In

that work, in their view, there was no question of conducting the conquest or re-conquest of the Soudan. But has the right hon. gentleman made up his mind with regard to the relations between Egypt and the Soudan? Has he ever considered what the Egyptian people think of the Soudan? Is he aware that, if there is one thing that the Egyptian has in horror more than another, it is being called upon to carry on the war in the Soudan? Is he aware that the army of Sir E. Wood was organised expressly without the obligation to serve in the Soudan? And if he is aware of these things, what does he mean by saying that it was our business to constitute a sufficient Egyptian army to supply the demands of Hicks Pasha as these might grow under the necessities of the time, and to enable Egypt to re-conquer the Soudan?

WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE RE-CONQUEST OF THE SOUDAN.

But what is the case of the Soudan? The other night, when I was referring to a paragraph in which something had been said about the Mahdi, I entirely declined to give any opinion about the Mahdi. I know this, and now I am speaking in conformity with the opinions of the man whom I look upon as by far the highest authority on the subject—I mean the opinions of General Gordon—the Soudan is a vast country, equal in size to France, Germany, and Spain, a desert country, as he states, with a deadly climate, inhabited thinly by sparse and warlike tribes, but still it is the country of those tribes. They love it as their country. The right hon. gentleman seems to me to have made up his mind—his whole speech shows it—that Egypt is in the right in subjecting that country, and in sending Turks, Circassians, and Anatolians to govern it. Sir, I have not made up my mind to any such thing. I decline to enter into that controversy. We have refused—and I believe the House will approve our refusing—to have anything to do with the re-conquest of the Soudan. During all my political life, I am thankful to say that I have never opened my lips in favour of a domination such as that which has been exercised by certain countries upon certain other countries, and I am not going now to begin. I look upon the possession of the Soudan—I won't say as a crime—that would be going a great deal too far—but I look upon it as the calamity of Egypt. It has been a drain on her treasury, it has been a drain on her men. I believe it is estimated that a hundred thousand Egyptians have laid down their lives in endeavouring to maintain that barren conquest, and at this moment, when your sympathies have been justly excited on behalf of 500 men in Tokar and in behalf of 500 men who were in Sincat, there are nine and twenty thousand Egyptian soldiers, or soldiers in the service of the Khedive, scattered over that enormous region. In those circumstances I utterly repudiate and repel the doctrine of the right hon. gentleman, that it was our duty to construct a military system for Egypt by which—I am supposing now that she had the means which she had not—she would have been able to re-establish in its fulness the re-conquest of the Soudan. The right hon. gentleman has challenged me to-night. I challenge him. He asks us to pronounce on vacillation and inconsistency, and we are ready to pronounce upon it. I ask him to put into a motion that which was the pith and essence of his speech to-night—

namely, that the Egyptian military system ought to have been constituted for the full support of Hicks and the re-conquest of the Soudan—and to take the judgment of the House upon it.

Sir S. NORTHCOTE.—I never said anything of the sort.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—The right hon. gentleman does not seem very fond of responsibility as to the meaning of what he says. What were his touching pictures of the inhuman conduct of Sir E. Malet, who would not give a little advice to General Hicks? Does the right hon. gentleman think that it was in our power to advise General Hicks as to the conduct of the war without becoming responsible for the war? I say that responsibility for the war directly followed upon our undertaking to advise as to the conduct of it. The right hon. gentleman thinks not. That is the very dignified course he would take. To say, "Hicks, you should march here, and Hicks, you should march there." Yes; to say here to go and there to advance, and if he advanced and succeeded we should have the credit; if he advanced and failed—oh "No, no," says the noble lord [Lord R. Churchill] opposite—we are not at all responsible. We could not advise without becoming responsible. Well, I do not stand alone upon that, because the House will recollect that in the most distinct manner the right hon. gentleman constructed the first division of his speech upon the insufficiency of the Egyptian army, which we had created, or which it was our duty to create, in order to enable this war to be carried on.

Sir S. NORTHCOTE.—Or to limit the purpose to which it was to be applied.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I will follow the right hon. gentleman—"or to limit the purpose to which it was to be applied." I examine his words. What do they mean? They mean the shattering of the Egyptian Government. The Egyptian Government was determined to adhere to the whole of the Soudan, and I cannot much blame them. They had been for sixty years in possession of it. They had struggled to hold it. The success of Hicks was remarkable. On almost every occasion he had defeated the Mahdi, and I believe the Egyptian Government would have laughed in our faces if we had attempted to force upon them the abandonment of the Soudan. We had no business to enforce our counsels upon the Egyptian Government, except in cases which we knew to be essential for our purposes in Egypt. How did the right hon. gentleman know, or how did we know, when the Mahdi was driven back at every point, that the Egyptian Government would not be able to hold its own? He says we ought to have restricted the limits of the shattered Egyptian Government, because it did not conform to our views in giving up what was no essential part of the Egypt in which we interfered. Well, we should have again become responsible for the retention of that part, as we should have given Egypt her charter to that part, and that part would have been just as liable to the fear of foreign domination as the rest. I decline—and let the right hon. gentleman get the House to censure us for it if he likes—to become a party to maintain that foreign domination.

Well, I think I have shown that it was not our mission to deal with the Soudan at all, and, if we had advised upon the conduct

of the war, we should have inevitably become responsible for a war, when Egypt was perfectly impotent to do more than she did, which was to create the army which Hicks Pacha thought sufficient. But the right hon. gentleman read it out, and now a right hon. gentleman sitting by his side contradicts him. We have every reason to believe that the people of Egypt—not the ruling classes, but the people—detest this war, while we have very great reason to doubt whether this war is based on those considerations of honour and interest, and just necessity and regard for the welfare of the governed, which alone can render any war tolerable or endurable for a moment in the sight of a Christian.

I think I have pretty well gone through what the right hon. gentleman has said upon the subject. He referred to Lord Dufferin's opinion about the limits to which the Soudan ought to be restricted, and I refer to that opinion because it is a matter of great weight. I am sorry it did not weigh with the Egyptian Government. It was the opinion of an intelligent friend, though not of a responsible Government, for Lord Dufferin did not speak on our behalf. But the rejection of that opinion, combined with the high estimation in which the Egyptian Government held Lord Dufferin, is a clear proof of the importance which they attached to the holding of the Soudan and that it was not possible for us to interfere with them, until it has been irresistibly shown that for them to attempt to hold the Soudan would be an insane sacrifice of the best interests of Egypt.

"ABANDON THE SOUDAN."

Sir, I am very much obliged to the House for the patience with which they have heard me thus far, and I am glad to say that I am making progress. After the defeat of Hicks—this is the second period—our position was entirely changed. We deemed that that defeat—especially when it was followed up by a second defeat—the knowledge of which reached us about three weeks later—was a distinct proof that it was impossible to hold the Soudan in any manner tolerably satisfactory; and that consequently it was our duty to speak frankly and boldly upon the matter, because the Soudan had assumed a question not of £100,000 a year, as was the old story, but it had assumed a character such as to make it evident that, if the struggle were to be continued, it would suck the life blood from the heart of Egypt.

I will now give the House very rapidly and succinctly the course of events simply by dates. On the 19th November came the first report of the defeat of Hicks. On the 20th November we thought that, supposing that news to be true, we were at once justified in saying to our agent, "If consulted, recommend the abandonment of the Soudan within certain limits." On the 21st we came to know the defeat of Hicks. There were subsequently rumours casting doubt upon it, but we believed it on the 21st. The Government then had to consider it, and consider the very grave measure of interrupting the course of the withdrawal of our troops, which had down to that time in all its stages proceeded with perfect satisfaction. On the 25th we suspended the evacuation of Cairo. On the 26th we found we were unfortunately at issue with the Egyptian

Government. They were, in the first place, not so certain of the news as we were. In the second place, they were contemplating assistance from the Turkish Government, and that also was a very serious question. It was very difficult to deny their right to contemplate assistance from Turkey, and very difficult under certain circumstances to deny the right of Turkey to give that assistance. But those were the reasons why we could not proceed peremptorily in the matter. We found they were disposed, if they could, to hold the Soudan, and at any rate to wait a while for fuller ascertainment of the facts before they took a positive course. That was on the 26th of November. They determined to wait, and take in hand in some manner this communication with Turkey of which I am not sure that we are directly cognisant with the particulars. On the 8th of December came the second defeat. That was a heavy blow succeeding a frightful blow; and on the 12th of December the Egyptian Government at length stated that they were ready to be guided by us in respect of the Soudan. Did we vacillate or hesitate? On the 13th of December, the very next day, we telegraphed our deliberate decision that the Egyptian Government should withdraw from the Soudan, and should confine its efforts to maintaining the valley of the Nile as far as Assouan, which is the limit, I think, of Egypt proper, or at all events, if there were strong military reasons for their going further, as far as the Wady Hafit, which is farther up the valley. Well, I am not going to censure Cherif Pacha and his colleagues. Their difficulties were enormous. We know the self-love of a class holding dominions of this kind. But while making every allowance, we found with deep regret that on the 22nd of December the Egyptian Government were again hesitating. That created a very serious state of affairs. This shattering of the Egyptian Government was the only alternative left. Naturally, we desired to turn to every other alternative rather than resort to it, but we found it impossible to avoid something that an unfriendly critic would describe by that term. On the 4th of January our demand was made peremptorily; on the 7th Cherif Pacha resigned, and on the 8th Nubar Pacha was appointed. He was in complete accord with us, and on that day it was perfectly competent to the garrison of Khartoum to retire in safety, and, so far as we know, it is the case now.

THE KHEDIVE ASSENTS.

Here I have the pleasure of contradicting the statement made by the right hon. gentleman the member for King's Lynn, that the abandonment of the Soudan was contrary to the deliberate judgment of the Khedive. If he has read the papers on the table of the House, he would have found that, on the contrary, whatever prior leanings the Khedive might have had, (and of course the prior leaning of a sovereign is to keep his territory,) the deliberate judgment of the Khedive was in complete accord with the policy of Her Majesty's Government. Now, my contention is, that we interferred to require the abandonment of the Soudan, as soon as we were justified in carrying up to that point what must be considered as a high-handed proceeding with regard to the interior administration of Egypt. But it may have occurred to many

that a long time had elapsed after we had heard of the defeat of Hicks, and the time I am now speaking of; and that all this time was lost. That would be an entire and absolute misconception, as I will point out. It was perfectly true, that in the region of political right principle, we were separated during that interval from the Egyptian Government. We at once adopted the policy of withdrawal. We had pressed it first as friendly advice, we pressed it at last as an imperative injunction; but during the whole interval between the first and last stage there were practical measures in progress upon which we are perfectly agreed, and which must have gone on precisely in the same manner, had Nubar Pacha been in office from the first day, instead of Cherif Pacha. We were all agreed that measures should be taken for the extrication of the garrisons. The force of Baker Pacha, which has unfortunately been defeated, was organised for that purpose. The hon. member, with his supreme authority, scoffs at that statement; and an impression has gone forth that Baker Pacha was sent as a sort of forlorn hope. The right hon. gentleman is not aware that my hon. friend, the Under-Secretary for India, happened to be in Egypt during the organisation of this force. Well, I will back my hon. friend, with some confidence in the match if it comes off. I am not going to make an extravagant assertion, but what I am going to say is this: that, when Baker Pacha set out, it will be obvious he was under no military obligation to undertake that business. He was not enlisted for that purpose, and was under no obligation for military service at all, unless he thought it a profitable and hopeful expedition. He was the head of the constabulary, and a constabulary is not organised—though the right hon. gentleman [Mr. Bourke] seems to think it is—for marching into foreign countries. I have no doubt he was entreated to go; I have no doubt the Egyptian Government greatly desired it: but what I say is, that he was under no military obligation to go, and I say, with the authority of my hon. friend, that Baker Pacha went with the belief, that the means at his command were adequate means for the immediate purpose he had in view. I am going to produce something else; but I produce in the first instance my hon. friend, who is not deficient in the faculty of expressing himself when he has occasion to address the House. Baker Pacha had very great doubts, as I understand, citing my hon. friend, whether it would be in his power to effect the whole operation of relief from Souakim to Berber, and from Berber to Khartoum; but he was very confident that his means were sufficient for the smaller operation of reaching Sincat. Here is a telegram of Sir Evelyn Baring's, dated February 2nd, 1884, three days only before the calamity which overtook Baker Pacha: "Baker telegraphs that he will advance to the relief of Toka to-morrow, 3rd, with 3,200 men, and there is every chance of success." Perhaps the right hon. gentleman [Mr. Bourke] will likewise overthrust the authentic official information received from Sir E. Baring. I have shown, then, that, during the whole of this time, the expedition of Baker Pacha was in preparation and in progress, and that there was a reasonable expectation that that expedition would suffice, if not to get to Khartoum, at any rate to deal with cases like the case of Sincat and the case of Toka. Well, that organisation removed a practical difficulty

for the moment, and prevented its becoming necessary for us to shatter the Egyptian Government at the earlier period, which the right hon. gentleman [Sir S. Northcote] seems at once emphatically to desire, and resolutely and positively to condemn. That brings me to the 5th of February, and the failure of Baker's efforts.

"WHAT IS GENERAL GORDON?"

I have gone through now, I think, all that relates to the speech of the right hon. gentleman; but I must say a few words on the remaining period of five days, on which I admit we are justly open to a careful scrutiny. And here I arrive at the case of General Gordon. General Gordon, in our estimation, is a very great feature in the case. What is General Gordon? He is no common man. I thank the right hon. gentleman for the manner in which he referred to him. I may also say that General Gordon is not alone. Other very able men are with him—one in particular, Colonel Stewart, his seconder and coadjutor—and, in fact, we have acted all along on the principle of obtaining for this difficult Egyptian problem the very best services we could possibly get. It is no exaggeration, in speaking of General Gordon, to say that he is a hero. It is no exaggeration to say that he is a Christian hero. It is no exaggeration to say that in his dealings with Oriental people he is also a genius—that he has a faculty of influence, or command, brought about by moral means, for no man in this House hates the unnecessary resort to blood more than General Gordon. He has that faculty which produces effects among those wild Eastern races almost unintelligible to us Western people. Perhaps it may be said: "If General Gordon has all these gifts, why did you not employ him sooner?" Again you have fallen into the decoy. You have not taken the least pains to ascertain whether it was possible or not. Now, the suggestion to employ General Gordon in the Soudan was made at a time so early, that it really is not within the limits of the direct responsibility of the present Government. As early as in the month of November, 1882, Sir Charles Wilson recommended the employment of General Gordon. But there were difficulties on both sides. It is very difficult to marry two people when one is averse, but it is still more difficult to marry them when, unfortunately, there is an aversion on both sides—and that, I believe, was found to be the case at that period between the Khedive and General Gordon. However, when it came to the grave period and to the increased responsibility upon us for the affairs of the Soudan that followed Hicks' defeat, then it was again our duty to have regard to the possibility of what might be got through General Gordon.

Sir STAFFORD NORTHCOTE.—Was there anything between those periods?

Mr. GLADSTONE.—No, but the right hon. gentleman will see that I have been contending all along, that, down to the time of Hicks' defeat, we should not have been justified in interfering to take in our own hands the management of the Soudan; and it was already down to us that the Egyptian Government objected to General Gordon. On the 1st of December Lord Granville had reason to believe he was in a condition to offer the services of General Gordon to the Egyptian

Government. Unfortunately they were refused, but not entirely without reason. The reason given was one that did not satisfy us, but still it went far to silence us, as is often the case; and I think the right hon. gentleman will find that to be the case too. The objection made to us was this:—"The Soudan is a country of strong Mohammedan fanaticism. For us to send a Christian as our agent, with a view to govern it, might be a dangerous course, which might cause a still more serious outbreak." We were not satisfied with the reason, but it was difficult to thrust that objection rudely aside, and it caused further delay. That was the offer of Lord Granville on December 1st. But we became acquainted with the sentiments of General Gordon; and, as time went on, the aversion of the Egyptian Government became mitigated, and at last entirely removed. However, it was not till the 16th of January—that is to say, eight days after Nubar Pacha came into office—that they sent to us a request for a qualified officer to undertake the conduct of the evacuation of the Soudan. That was sent to us on the 16th of January, and on the 18th General Gordon was on his way to Egypt. At Cairo General Gordon formed his plan. A paper will be laid on the table, I believe. We received General Gordon's plan first, in the shape of a valuable memorandum of his own, but we have had some doubts whether it was our duty to produce his plan. If we could have produced it to this House, or even to this country alone, it would have been another matter, but the promulgation of that plan through the telegraph in Egypt might have caused its failure. All I will say of it on this occasion—for I would rather not go into particulars about it—is, that it was evidently a well-reasoned and considered plan; that it was entirely pacific in its basis; that it proceeded on the belief,—a belief, which would have been fanatical or presumptuous in my case, or in the case of most of those in this House, but which in the case of General Gordon, with his experience and gifts, was, I believe, neither the one nor the other—not that he certainly must, but that he fairly might hope to, exercise a strong pacific influence by going to the right persons in the Soudan; and it was his desire quite as much as ours that this should be done without any resort whatever to violent means. As I have said, General Gordon went, not for the purpose of re-conquering the Soudan or of persuading the chiefs of the Soudan again to submit themselves to the Egyptian Government. He went for the double purpose of evacuating the country by the extrication of the Egyptian garrisons and reconstituting it by giving back to those chiefs their ancestral powers, which had been withdrawn or suspended during the period of the Egyptian Government. I have told the House already that General Gordon had in view the withdrawal from the country of no less than 29,000 persons paying military service to Egypt. The House will see how vast was the trust placed in the hands of this remarkable person. We cannot exaggerate the importance we attach to it. We were resolved to do nothing which should interfere with this great pacific scheme, the only scheme which promised a satisfactory solution of the Soudanese difficulty by at once extricating the garrisons and reconstituting the country upon its own basis and its local privileges. It was our duty, whatever we might feel as to a particular portion of the garrisons, to beware of interfering with Gordon's plans

generally, and, before we adopted any scheme that should bear that aspect, to ask whether in his judgment there would or would not be such an interference.

THE DEFEAT OF BAKER PASHA.

I will now explain to the House what we have been doing during the last seven days. February 5th, when the disaster happened to Baker Pacha, unfortunately found us cut off for a moment from communication with Gordon. He had considered it his duty to take the shortest and swiftest means to convey himself to Khartoum, and that severed him from the telegraph, which runs up the course of the river. We resumed the telegraph on the 11th—on the morning of yesterday. We used our utmost endeavours to communicate with him at the earliest moment. We did not wait till we were coming near the time of his possibly reaching Berber, but we sent our messages from the very first moment when we thought there was a chance, being determined to anticipate the possibility of his arrival. We did that on Thursday or Friday of last week, and inquired from him what were his views after Baker Pacha's defeat. We had already taken certain measures. Our first duty was to recollect that the defeat of Baker Pacha altered the position of Suakim, and therefore we took measures, as rapidly as was in our power, to make Suakim safe. We further issued preliminary orders to the British ships that were going up and down the Red Sea, in order to have them in readiness if any action should be found possible and advisable. When Baker Pacha was defeated, the case of Sincat was hopeless as to military help. It was known for a long time that the garrison had been in extremity. I have read a telegram which acquaints us that Baker Pacha was on the way to its relief, and that he had every hope of succeeding in that relief. No means that we could possibly use could have availed in the slightest degree to bring aid to Sincat, before the time when unhappily it fell. That was not a question of difficulty, but of absolute impossibility. There was another mode, as to which I believe Admiral Hewett and Sir E. Baring have been in communication. Admiral Hewett has endeavoured to see what could be done by negotiations for the extrication of the garrison. He failed, but this failure only became known to us about ten o'clock last night. I think it was reasonable and right that he should make the effort in the impossibility of any other effort that could be made. But we were bound to take into view this—would an attempt of relief in that quarter have the effect of endangering first of all the precious life of General Gordon, on which the whole hope of the solution of this question was depending? would it also have the effect of endangering the measures for the extrication of the 29,000 men, who, after all, must be regarded as of more weight than the 500 in Sincat? We have at last heard by telegraph from General Gordon on that subject. Having reached Berber, he has received our messages, and we are satisfied from his replies that, although he does not like the use of military means, yet such an effort as might be made for the relief of Tokar would not in his view interfere with his safety or the likelihood of his success. He does not speak with enthusiasm of anything of that kind, but he leaves upon us the entire respon-

sibility of such proceeding. In these circumstances we have not hesitated for a moment. Having been put in possession, partly by evidence that reached us through Colonel Stewart, and now again since the House met by telegraph from General Gordon, we have come to the resolution to gather immediately, with absolutely the utmost promptitude, a force—a British force—at Snakim, with the view if possible to the relief of Tokar, with the computation of its being sufficient for that purpose, if the garrison should be able to hold out.

We have acted, therefore, without the smallest hesitation upon our own undivided responsibility for a purpose, which implies no departure whatever from our policy in regard to the re-conquest of the Soudan, but with the view of performing what I hope may be regarded as a simple service to humanity, which I am quite sure that this House and the country will not grudge. When I said yesterday that it was not a question of hours, my meaning was this: that our communications with ships would not have been in the slightest degree accelerated by having been made yesterday, and to-day, on the contrary, the position of the ships would enable us to do so. The House will therefore understand that our injunctions and directions have, as I trust, by this time reached the authorities in Egypt, and that their first efforts to give effect to them have probably been by this time taken.

I think I have now stated distinctly what we have been about during the last week, and why we thought it wrong, without any reference to General Gordon, in his great and comprehensive plan, to pursue a purpose, which, although one of humanity, and one strongly appealing to the feeling of this country, yet concerned, after all, but a very limited portion of a very difficult and formidable undertaking. I stated that we took preliminary measures with a view to the increase of the force at Snakim. We have moved up troops from Malta in order to be in a condition to put them forward for any purpose of this kind.

Sir M. H. BEACH.—How many?

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I think it would be very much better that I should not enter upon that. We have had from Admiral Hewett, the best authority on the spot—no doubt he had consulted with others—a very distinct account of what he considered necessary for the relief of Tokar.

Sir M. H. BEACH.—I should not have put the question had it not been told that the number was stated in another place.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I do not know whether the right hon. gentleman means the final or the initial number. I have been speaking of initial measures. If he means the final number, it will be a number somewhat in excess of the number considered by Admiral Hewett to be sufficient for the purpose. I believe it will be 4,000 men. I do not enter into the constituent parts, but I believe that will not be inexact in round numbers.

Now, I have endeavoured to give the reasons why we have acted and why we did not act before. I revert to the motion of the right hon. gentleman. I hope it will be thought that I have not shrunk from grappling with it. If the House will vote for it—which I own I do not expect—it would be a singular case of voting for a motion, on behalf of which not a single word has been said by the mover. The right hon.

gentleman made imputations. These imputations, if they imply anything at all—and the right hon. gentleman seems to say that they do not imply anything at all—imply that he desires and recommends a policy which we think alike opposed to prudence, to humanity, and to justice. I have thus stated the case of the Government. I make in few words my final appeal to the House of Commons, and I ask, from your indulgence it may be, but also from your justice, that acquittal which we feel we are entitled to claim.

THE FRANCHISE BILL.

(IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 28, 1834.)

I CONCEIVE that this Bill, this proposition, may be presented to the House under any one, and indeed under all, of three distinct and several aspects. In the first place, it is on our part a redemption of a pledge, because, although I do not use the word "pledge" in its more narrow and objectionable sense, there is no doubt, I think, as regards the persons prominently concerned in conducting the affairs of the country in conjunction with the Liberal party, that at and before, as well as since, the last election they have constantly assured the country that they regarded the work of Parliamentary reform as a proper and vital part of the mission, so to speak, of the present Parliament. The proposition may be regarded, secondly, as intended to satisfy a desire, for our belief is that a desire for the extension of the household franchise to the counties is widely and generally entertained among the classes who are to be affected by that extension. But there is another aspect in which I for one should hope that it will still more pointedly and constantly be viewed. It is a proposal in satisfaction of a pledge. It is a proposal to meet a desire. But above all it is a proposal in my view, and I think I may say in our view, to add strength to the State. I am not prepared to discuss admission to the franchise as it was discussed fifty years ago, when Lord John Russell had to state with almost bated breath that he expected to add in the three kingdoms half a million to the constituencies. It is not now a question of nicely calculated less or more. I take my stand on the broad principle that the enfranchisement of capable citizens, be they few or be they many—and if they be many so much the better—gives an addition of strength to the State. The strength of the modern State lies in the representative system. I rejoice to think that in this happy country and under this happy Constitution we have other sources of strength in the respect paid to various orders of the State, and in the authority they enjoy, and in the unbroken course which has been allowed

to most of our national traditions; but still, in the main, it is the representative system which is the strength of the modern State in general, and of the State in this country in particular. Sir, I may say—it is an illustration which won't occupy more than a moment—that never has this great truth been so vividly illustrated as in the war of the American Republic. The convulsion of that country between 1861 and 1865 was perhaps the most frightful which ever assailed a national existence. The efforts which were made on both sides were marked. The exertions by which alone the movement was put down were not only extraordinary, they were what would antecedently have been called impossible, and they were only rendered possible by the fact that they proceeded from a nation where every capable citizen was enfranchised and had a direct and an energetic interest in the well-being and the unity of the State.

WHO ARE CAPABLE CITIZENS?

Sir, the only question that remains in the general argument is, who are capable citizens? and, fortunately, that is a question which, on the present occasion, need not be argued at length, for it has been already settled—in the first place by a solemn legislative judgment acquiesced in by both parties in the State, and in the second place by the experience of the last more than fifteen years. Who, sir, are the capable citizens of the State, whom it is proposed to enfranchise? It is proposed in the main to enfranchise the county population on the footing, and according to the measure, that has already been administered to the population of the towns. What are the main constituents of the county population? First of all, they are the minor tradesmen of the country, and the skilled labourers and artisans in all the common arts of life, and especially in connection with our great mining industry. Is there any doubt that these are capable citizens? You (the Opposition) have yourselves asserted it by enfranchising them in the towns, and we can only say that we heartily subscribe to the assertion. But besides the artisans and the minor tradesmen scattered throughout our rural towns we have also to deal with the peasantry of the country. Is there any doubt that the peasantry of the country are capable citizens, qualified for enfranchisement, qualified to make good use of their power as voters? This is a question which has been solved for us by the first and second Reform Bills, because many of the places which under the name of towns are now represented in this House are really rural communities, based upon a peasant constituency. For my part I should be quite ready to fight the battle of the peasant upon general and argumentative grounds. I believe the peasant generally to be, not in the highest sense, but in a very real sense, a skilled labourer. He is not a man tied down to one mechanical exercise of his physical powers. He is a man who must do many things, and many things which require in him the exercise of active intelligence. But as I say, it is not necessary to argue on that ground, first of all because we have got his friends here, from whom we must anticipate great zeal for his enfranchisement; and secondly, because the question has been settled by legislative authority in the towns, and by practical experience. If he has a defect it is that he is too ready, perhaps, to work with and to accept the influence of his

superiors—superiors, I mean, in worldly station. But that is the last defect that you (the Opposition) will be disposed to plead against him, and it is a defect that we do not feel ourselves entitled to plead, and that we are not at all inclined to plead. We are ready to take him as he is, and joyfully bring him within the reach of this last and highest privilege of the Constitution.

WHOLESALE DISFRANCHISEMENT.

There is only one other word, sir, to add on this part of the subject. The present position of the franchise is one of greater and grosser anomaly than any in which it has been heretofore placed, because the exclusion of persons of the same class and the same description is more palpable and more pervading than before, being, in fact, spread over the whole country, persons being excluded in one place while the same persons are admitted in another. I wish just to call the attention of the House to an important fact connected with this part of the question which is of frequent occurrence. It is a thing which the House detests, and which we in this Bill shall endeavour to avoid—namely, the infliction of personal disfranchisement. Observe how the present state of the franchise law brings this about. It is known and well understood that a labourer must follow his labour. Where his labour goes, where the works go in which he is employed, he must follow. He cannot remain at a great distance from them; and the instance I will give—and though I am not personally conversant with it, I believe there is no doubt about the fact—is an instance which I think singularly applicable. It is that of the ship-building works on the Clyde. Those works were within the precincts of the city of Glasgow, and the persons who laboured in them were able to remain within the city, being near their work, and at the same time to enjoy the franchise. But the marvellous enterprise of Glasgow, which has made that city the centre and crown of the ship-building business of the world, could not be confined within the limits of the city of Glasgow, and it moved down the river. As the trade moved down the river the artisans required to move down the river with it. That was a matter of necessity, and the obedience to that necessity involves under the present law wholesale disfranchisement. That is an argument which is sufficient for disposing of the general question. The whole population, I rejoice to think, have liberty of speech, they have liberty of writing, they have liberty of meeting in public, they have liberty of private association, they have liberty of petitioning Parliament. All these privileges are not privileges taking away from us, diminishing our power and security, they are all of them privileges on the existence of which our security depends. Without them we could not be secure. I ask you to confer upon the very same classes the crowning privilege of voting for a representative in Parliament, and then I say we who are strong now as a nation and a State shall by virtue of that change be stronger still.

THE BOROUGH FRANCHISE.

I shall be obliged from the circumstances in which I stand to deal with this subject on its affirmative and on its negative side. I shall endeavour to explain to the House, without undue detail and without affecting too much of legal and technical precision, what are the provisions contained in the Bill that I propose on the part of the Government to introduce. But it will be equally necessary for me to dwell upon proposals which some have expected, and some have desired to see in the Bill, but which the Bill does not contain; because what I have to say upon that subject is vital to all hope of carrying what is contained in the Bill. Now I have considered what would be the most convenient course of exposition to the House, and I have arrived at this conclusion—I wish to fix and fasten your attention in the first place upon the borough franchise as it exists in England, because the borough franchise as it exists in England, with the modifications which we propose to introduce into it, and which I will immediately proceed to explain, is the hinge of the whole Bill. Upon that borough franchise the entire structure holds as respects not only England, but likewise as respects Scotland, and as respects Ireland. The borough franchise, as it is, is three-fold. I put entirely out of sight what are sometimes called the “ancient-right” franchises—the case of freemen, the case of liverymen, the case of burgess tenure, and whatever other miscellaneous franchises there are surviving under the old system. I put them aside, for they are not touched by the Bill for reasons which I will afterwards explain. Setting these aside, then, the borough franchise is three-fold. It consists, in the first place, of enfranchised occupiers of buildings of £10 clear annual value, with or without land. That was the franchise established by the Act of 1832. It consists, in the second place, of inhabiting occupiers of rated dwelling-houses. That is the franchise established and extended by the Acts of 1867, 1868, and 1869, and is the principal borough franchise of the country. The third branch of the borough franchise is the lodger franchise. So much for the present borough franchise in England.

THE SERVICE FRANCHISE.

Now I come to the future borough franchise which we propose. We leave the “ancient-right” franchises, as I have already said, exactly as they now are. We touch them in no way. We leave the household franchise established by the Act of 1867 exactly as it is now. We leave the lodger franchise exactly as it is now. But we do two things notwithstanding. First of all, for reasons which are partly of principle and partly with a view to unity, we extend the £10 clear yearly value franchise to cases where the occupation is of land without houses or buildings. At present it may be for houses or buildings alone, or houses or buildings with land. We extend it to land alone without buildings. There is a more important change which we propose to introduce, and it is also in the direction of extension. We propose to establish a new franchise, which I should call—till a better phrase be discovered—the service franchise. It will

be given to persons who are inhabitants, and in the sense of inhabitancy, who are occupiers. The present law restricts, I believe, the signification of the term "occupiers" to those who are either owners or tenants. Our object is to provide a franchise for those inhabitants who are neither owners nor tenants; but they must be householders in this sense—either, in the first place, that they are actual inhabitants; or, in the second place, that there is no other inhabitant with them, superseding them or standing in the same position with them; and in the third place, they must either be inhabitants of an integral house or else of that separate part of a house which, at any rate, so far as England is concerned, has already been declared to be a house for electoral purposes. Hon. gentlemen are aware of the general reasons which may be pleaded in favour of this enlargement. It is an enlargement absolutely required by the principle of this Bill, because the principal and central idea of this Bill is to give every householder a vote. The householder is just as much a householder, and has just as much the responsibility of a householder, whether he is in the eye of the law an owner or a tenant, or whether he is not, provided he is an inhabitant in the sense I have described. And this service franchise is a far-reaching franchise. It goes to men of high class, who inhabit valuable houses, as the officers of great institutions. It descends to men of humble class, who are the servants of the gentry, or the servants of the farmer, or the servants of some other employer of labour who are neither owners nor tenants, and who, in many cases, cannot be held as tenants, in consequence of the essential conditions intended to be realised through their labours, but who fully fulfil the idea of responsible inhabitant householders. The House will, therefore, see that in the future borough franchise, if our proposals be adopted, there will be a four-fold occupation or householding franchise—the old clear yearly value franchise of the Act of 1832, the lodger franchise of the Act of 1867, the service franchise of the Act (as I trust) of 1884, and there will be what is the most important of them all—the household franchise proposed in 1867, and developed from its original narrow and stunted proportions, partly by the votes of this House, and partly by subsequent Acts of Parliament, into what it is now—namely, the principal franchise of the cities and towns of this country. If hon. gentlemen will be good enough to retain in their minds this fourfold occupation franchise—the principal and almost exclusive basis of the franchise in English boroughs hereafter—they will have laid down a fixed standing point, from which they will be easily able to follow me in everything which I have further to explain.

THE PRESENT COUNTY FRANCHISE.

I pass from the boroughs of England to the counties of England. The present county franchise I shall describe without any attempt at technical precision, but in popular terms, and I throw it into three classes. There is, first of all, the £50 rental franchise of occupiers introduced under what was called the Chandos clause in the Act of 1832, and next to this the £12 rating franchise of occupiers introduced by the Act of 1867. These are different in their minute conditions,

although they are alike in certain of these conditions, and in this condition particularly—that neither the one nor the other requires residence, and yet that they both of them fall under the condition of occupation franchise. The third description of the voter in the county is the voter in respect of property. Here again I shall not descend into detail, but simply say that, by the voter in respect of property I mean the man who votes in respect of a freehold, in respect of a copyhold, or in respect of a leasehold. That is the present county franchise.

THE NEW FRANCHISE.

And now you will ask, how do we propose to deal with it? We propose to proceed as follows—I name the minor changes first. The first of these changes is one which is really intended for no other purpose than that of practical convenience and simplicity. It is, that we propose to abolish the £50 franchise, which I shall call for convenience sake the £50 rental franchise. I propose to abolish it because two categories of franchise where only one is necessary are highly inconvenient in the rate books and registration of the country, and because we believe it is hardly possible that there will be any man entitled to this £50 rental franchise who will not come within the county franchise as we propose it for the future. The second change we propose is to reduce the figure of the rating franchise of 1867 from £12 rateable value to £10 clear yearly value. Those who hear me are aware that that will be a reduction greater in amount than the mere difference between £12 and £10, and it will appear, I think, as I proceed further, why it is that we propose to place this franchise on the basis of the clear yearly value rather than on the basis of the rateable value—namely, because we thereby get a definition which we think will run tolerably well through the three countries. Sir, to this franchise we do not propose to attach the condition of residence. These, as I have said, are the minor changes.

But I now come to the main change of the Bill. It is this. I have said there were four occupation franchises in boroughs, one of them the £10 clear yearly value, the other three, the household, the lodger, and the service franchise. These three we propose to import into the counties precisely as they are to be in the boroughs. Now I hope that will be clearly understood, because I wish to fasten attention upon it, as it is the main, the most operative, and the most extensive, perhaps I should also say the most beneficial change that is proposed.

Well, then, with regard to the property franchises, I will not dwell upon them at length, but I will simply for the present say this much: We maintain the property franchises in principle, but we propose provisions which we think are necessary in order to secure them against abuses which are known in many parts of the country, and which in some parts are grievous and menacing to the people. Now I wish to keep together all that relates to the question of occupation. Sir, a fundamental part of the structure of this Bill is the union of the three kingdoms in one measure, and essentially, so far as we without undue complexity can achieve it, not only in one measure, but in one and the same franchise.

SCOTLAND.

I pass from England to the case of Scotland, which is a comparatively simple case. My first observation with respect to Scotland, which I beg hon. members from Scotland to bear in mind, is that we leave Scotland everything she at present possesses. She has certain peculiarities, and especially in regard to the borough franchise; it is not necessary for me to enter upon them now, but every thing that is peculiar to Scotland will be left as it is. In the second place, we import the service franchise into Scotch boroughs, [the Scotch boroughs being already possessed of the lodger and the household franchise, and likewise the £10 clear yearly value franchise. In that way we establish an identity of franchise between Scotch and English boroughs, with the exception of those small peculiarities which we find in either country. I have done now with the Scotch boroughs. As regards the Scotch counties the case is pretty simple. We follow the line already laid down for English counties, and we propose to absorb in Scotland, as in England, the £50 rental franchise, which we believe will be quite unnecessary, and will be absorbed in what is now the £14 rated franchise. We propose to reduce that £14 rated franchise to the £10 clear yearly value franchise, as in England. We also import into Scotch counties the three franchises which they at present want, as the English counties want them—the household, the lodger, and the service franchises. The House will thus understand that we have got to a virtual identity of the franchise, with small and insignificant exceptions, as between Scotland and England.

IRELAND.

The case of Ireland is rather more complicated, but with the patient kindness of the House I am sure there will be no difficulty in explaining what we propose to do. The present borough franchise in Ireland is twofold. In the first place there is the £4 rating franchise, but that franchise is not subject to the limitation of the £10 clear yearly value franchise, as in England—viz., that it must consist either of buildings, or of buildings and land. It is a franchise which may exist with respect to land alone. Besides that £4 rating franchise, there is the lodger franchise. With regard to the borough franchise in Ireland, for the future, we propose to leave the lodger franchise as it is now. With regard to the £4 rating franchise I think it will convey the clearest idea if I say that we propose to abolish it; and there will be a franchise, according to our plan, dependent upon value, and it will be a franchise of £10 clear yearly value, retaining all the other conditions of the £4 rating franchise, and identical with the £10 clear yearly value franchise in England and Scotland, except that each of the three countries has its own separate method of ascertaining what the clear yearly value is, with which we don't propose to interfere. We leave the lodger franchise as it is, and we import into Irish boroughs the service franchise and the household franchise, which is the great thing we have in view, precisely as in England.

With respect to the Irish counties, the matter is simple. We there

have to deal with a franchise analogous to the £12 rating franchise in England. We simply reduce the county franchise in Ireland to one of £10 clear yearly value, without altering its conditions in other respects. This is in itself a small change. Having done that, we introduce the great change in Ireland which we propose in England and in Scotland, and we establish in Irish counties, as in Scotland and England, in the first place the lodger franchise, in the second place the service franchise, and in the third place, and far above all, the household franchise. The House, I think, will see, therefore, in the first place, how far we have gone towards the identification of borough and county franchise, and, in the second place, that we have gone the whole length that it was possible to go in the identification of the franchise in the three kingdoms, and it is a vital and essential part of our measure that they should be treated upon a footing of perfect political equality.

I have done now with the occupation franchises; and the reason why I have separated them from the property franchises is this—that occupation will inevitably be under the new system the ground and main foundation of our electoral system. Now, the property franchises will and must be few in number. The legitimate property franchises may be, perhaps, somewhat fewer than now, but they must be fewer in number in comparison with the occupation franchises. It is not possible to estimate with precision what proportion of our franchises hereafter will be occupation franchises; but I certainly for myself could not place the proportion of occupying franchises to property franchises, under the operation of this measure, at a lower rate than five as compared to one.

PROPERTY FRANCHISE.

Now I come to the question of property franchise in English counties. Scotland and Ireland are also equally affected, so I shall not make separate statements with regard to them. As I have said, the property franchises in our English counties are freehold, copyhold, and leasehold. We propose that they shall in principle remain; and the first question that arises is, Shall they, or shall they not, be made subject to the condition of residence? We are of opinion, sir, that upon the whole it is not necessary that they should be subjected to the condition of residence. There is a sort of show about the old English electoral law, as if its original principle made residence a condition of the property franchise, which was then the exclusive county franchise. But we do not find that that idea bears scrutiny. The two matters of fact to which alone I need refer are first of all the dictum of Lord Coke, delivered in 1620, which governed the action of the House of Commons, and governed the practice thereafter. I won't enter into a detail of the case; but Lord Coke's declaration—and the House of Commons acted upon it—was that residence was not enforced as a condition of the property franchise, according to the usage established in this country. And so it continued, and matters continued to be regulated upon that footing for a great length of time until we arrive at the reign of George III. and the Ministry of Lord North. In the time of that Ministry, but not by the action of that Ministry, and not under the influence of that Ministry,

but apparently by the spontaneous action of the House of Commons itself, a Bill was introduced, which finally and formally dissociated residence from the exercise of the franchise in respect of property. That is the state of things we find established, and which, so far as residence is concerned, we propose to leave. We in no way alter the law of residence, but we do feel that it is quite necessary to make provision against abuses. Those abuses are undoubtedly connected in a great degree with non-residence. I think that if we compare the number of non-resident voters in counties generally with the total county constituencies, we shall find that they are about one-eleventh part. But I am familiar with the case of a county where the non-resident voters are one-fourth part of the constituency. I need not explain to the House what kind of voters they are, or by what process they have appeared upon the roll of county electors, nor will I go into further detail to justify at this moment the propositions which we shall be amply able to justify, should they be questioned. At present my object is to lay clearly before the House our proposal, rather than to support and defend it in detail.

FAGGOT VOTES.

We propose, then, sir, two enactments. In the first place, we propose to disqualify, with due exceptions, those incorporeal hereditaments which are, or readily may be, employed for the creation of fictitious votes. Those incorporeal hereditaments may be classed under two principal categories; in the first of these categories are rent charges; and in the second, are feus, head rents, and the like, where there is no reversion to the person who takes the benefit of the feu or head rent. Well, sir, we think that it is manifest that there is one just exception, and that is the exception of the tithe-rent-charge of a parish held in single ownership. If we do not retain the condition of single ownership, tithe-rent charge, made, as it is, on every field, would evidently become favourable to the creation of fictitious votes, not in Scotland, where they are not so happy as to possess it, but in England. But the tithe-rent charge is usually held for the parish; and the tithe-rent charge, not only because it is a very ancient property—perhaps the most ancient interest in land which exists in the country—but also because it is a rateable one—indeed, it has the quality of rateability more than any other description of property—we distinctly except, and hold that it should continue to qualify as now. That is one provision against incorporeal hereditaments of the description I have named. There are other incorporeal hereditaments, rather numerous, I believe, in kind, but less significant and important, to which I need not refer. Then the other provision we propose to make is a provision against the sub-division of hereditaments. That is the other grand instrument by which this great operation, I might almost call it one of the staple manufactures of the country—the manufacture of votes—is conducted by the most skilled of all the capitalists who apply themselves to that particular work. I have in my possession a photograph of a hereditament, a certain structure not very imposing in itself, occupied by a single person and conferring one occupation franchise, but held by forty-five owners—every one of whom

stands on the register in virtue of his forty-fifth part of this building, which qualifies only a single occupation voter. But it is right and necessary that we should distinguish between subdivision for Parliamentary purposes and subdivision which arises in the natural course of family transactions or of business; and I may therefore say at once that we except from our disqualifying provision as to subdivision, cases where the share of subdivided property is obtained by descent, by succession, by marriage, by marriage settlement, or by will. There is another case, an important case, which ought to be taken in view, and which will be provided for, but in another manner. There may be a case of a joint ownership for the purposes of trade or business, and it may be said that the persons having such joint ownership, and using it for trade or business, ought not to be disqualified; nor will they be disqualified, because as joint occupiers they will be registered in respect of their trade or business. But we strike, and I hope strike effectually, at the fictitious vote, and by the fictitious vote I mean two descriptions of franchise—one where there is no real proprietary interest at all, but a naked dominion divested of every incident of dominion, and dependent merely on a life, and not always dependent on the life of the person himself who holds it, but dependent on some other's life. That is the worst, and what I may call the lowest, description of fictitious vote. But we also strike at fictitious votes where they have been secured through the machinery I have just been referring to, either of incorporeal hereditaments or of subdivision, and where there is no natural association with place; because we hold that when Parliament gives the franchise to a certain county or a certain town, its meaning is that that franchise is to be exercised by the people who belong to it, and not by a set of strangers who come in by surreptitious means, overpowering the genuine constitutional majority by a foreign importation, or, to employ words that have lately been used, by an invasion from without.

DISFRANCHISE NO ONE.

Sir, I think the House will now see that the Bill I am proposing to introduce is substantially, though not technically, confined to one main view, one great provision—to give unity and completeness to the household and occupation franchises throughout the United Kingdom. The principle upon which it proceeds is, that the head of every household, under the conditions of the law, shall vote, and we seek to go as far as we can to get the heads of households and enfranchise them. The lodger and service franchises we look upon simply as branches, I may call them enlargements, of the household franchise. It is, in point of fact, if it is to be described by a single phrase, a Household Franchise Bill for the United Kingdom; and the popular idea has not been far wrong which has seized upon the conception of it as a measure which is to extend to the counties what is now enjoyed by the towns, although in making that extension we endeavour to accompany it with some further provisions for giving greater completeness in practical application to the idea of household franchise. Now, let me say shortly, we leave the "ancient-right" franchises alone. Let me say that we disfranchise personally no one. Wherever there is a provision in the Bill which would

operate against the creation of franchises hereafter, identical in principle with some that now exist, we do not interfere with the right already legally acquired, however illegitimate it may seem to be. We leave the property vote alone, and confine ourselves to the endeavour to stop the extension of fictitious votes.

NEVER A COMPLETE BILL.

Well, sir, these are the matters which the Bill contains ; but all will feel that it is impossible for me on this occasion to pass by what the Bill does not contain. I am prepared for the complaint that this is not a complete Bill, and for the question, "Why don't you introduce a complete Bill?" On that I have some things to say which appear to me to be of very considerable force, but at any rate I will state them ; and the first thing I will state is, that there never has been a complete Bill presented to Parliament on this subject of Parliamentary Reform. Never one. I make that assertion in the broadest way. There never has been a complete Bill presented to Parliament. Parliament has never attempted a complete Bill ; and, moreover, I will go a little further, and say that Governments and Parliaments would have committed a grievous error in judgment—I might almost say they would have been out of their senses—if they had attempted a complete Bill. There are different points in which a Bill may be complete. Was the Bill of 1831, or the Bill of 1832, a complete Bill? Why, sir, they touched England alone. And what was England alone at that time? Not greatly more than one-half the United Kingdom. At that time, in 1831, the population of England was under fourteen millions ; the population of Scotland and Ireland was over ten millions ; and Ireland and Scotland were left to the mercy of Parliament, and were not touched by the principle of what is justly called the Great Reform Bill. There was no such thing as a complete Bill on that occasion, and there never has been a complete Bill.

Sir, there are three essential divisions of this great subject, and if we intend to deal with the subject as practical men, if we are endeavouring to pass a measure, and not to overlay and smother it, we must recognise the limitation which is imposed, not upon our will and choice, but upon our power, by the nature of the case and by the conditions under which Parliamentary government is now carried on. The first of these three great divisions is to define the right of the individual—that is, to fix the franchise. To fix the franchise is of itself an enormous task ; it is a question which may be led out, if you should think fit, into a score or scores of ramifications. But it is clearly one of principle—it is, to fix the right of the individual who shall be entitled to vote. The second branch of the question is to provide machinery for the exercise of that right, and that is the subject of registration. It has never been found, as far as I am aware, practicable to unite this vital subject of good registration with the subject of the franchise. The third is, to gather the persons whom Parliament judges to be capable of exercising the franchise with benefit to themselves and to the country into local communities ; and that is the business of distribution of seats.

AIM ONLY AT THE ATTAINABLE.

Now, sir, what do we attempt? I am going, perhaps, to make a confession as to what you may think the nakedness of the land—of the stinty character of the measure; but looking at these three divisions we deal only with one, and we deal with that one, not upon exhaustive principles, but with a view to great practical ends, leaving much upon which the critic and the speculator may, if they think fit, exercise their ingenuity in the way of remark or of complaint. And why is it we should not present a complete Bill? The faculty of authorship is getting very weak, I am afraid, in myself, although many of my colleagues are not only in the vigour of life, but sufficiently fertile of mind and brain, and I have no doubt that with our joint authorship we could have produced a perfectly complete Bill. Why did we not do so? Because if we had done so we knew as well as if the thing had happened that the Bill must remain a Bill, and would never become an Act. I say this is not a perfect Bill with regard to the franchise. What are the questions we leave out? We do not aim at ideal perfection, and I hope gentlemen will not force us upon that line; it would be the "Road to Ruin." I have heard that there have been artists and authors who never could satisfy themselves as to the perfection of their picture, or of their diction, as the case may be, and in consequence the picture and the diction have been wasted. I remember a most venerable archbishop—Archbishop Howley—who, with respect be it spoken, was the worst speaker in the House of Lords. And why? Because he was a man of inferior intellect? He was a man of remarkable intellect, remarkable education, remarkable refinement, but unfortunately he had a taste so fastidious that he never could satisfy himself that his terms were perfect and his phrases entirely beyond criticism, and in consequence of his fastidiousness between the one and the other catastrophe befel him. No, sir; ideal perfection is not the true basis of English legislation. We look at the attainable; we look at the practicable; and we have too much of English sense to be drawn away by those sanguine delineations of what might possibly be attained in Utopia, from a path which promises to enable us to effect great good for the people of England. This is not an exhaustive list, but to aim at an ideal franchise might draw in the question of proportional representation; the question of women's suffrage; the question with regard to which my right hon. friend (Mr. Bright) has invented a wicked phrase, as he has invented a good many. I call a phrase a wicked phrase when it commits murder, and my right hon. friend has had the fortune repeatedly to kill a proposal by a phrase. There was once a group of proposals made in a Reform Bill which he at once dubbed "fancy franchises," and by that phrase he killed them all. There is also the question of voting papers; the question of the franchises of the Universities, of the freeman's franchises, of the livery franchise and the burgh franchise; and there is again the principle of whether one man should have more than one vote. There is, in fact, no end to the proposals that might be raised even on the stage of the first of these three great divisions, without touching the other two. Our principle has been to inquire what was practicable;

what were the conditions under which we had to move and to act in the present state of Parliament, and of parliamentary business. We have heard in former years, and possibly we may hear this year, something about the consequences of deck-loading a ship. We are determined, as far as depends upon us, not to deck-load our Franchise Bill. We consider that we have filled the hold with a good and a sufficient cargo, but the deck-loading of it would be a preliminary to its foundering; and were we with that impression—nay, not merely impression, but with that conviction and knowledge—to encumber our Bill with unnecessary weight, we should be traitors to the cause which we profess to have taken in hand, and we therefore will have nothing to do with giving encouragement to such a policy. As to registration, all I will say is this, that our Bill is framed with the intention of preparing a state of things in which the whole occupation franchise, which, I believe, will be about five-sixths of the franchise, shall be a self-acting franchise, and the labour, anxiety, and expense connected with proof of title, which is, after all, according to our view, the affair of the public and the State rather than of the individual, will, I trust, be got rid of. But, at the same time, our Bill is not a complete Bill in that vital respect, and we look to the introduction of another Bill for the purpose, with which we shall be prepared immediately when the House has supplied us with the basis on which it wishes us to proceed.

REDISTRIBUTION.

I now come to the third of these great problems, and I think the House will not be surprised when I say that, if we find ourselves quite incompetent, consistently with the aims we have in view and with public interests, to deal with the franchise in an exhaustive manner, they will not be surprised when I say that, *a fortiori*, in our opinion it would be absurd for us to attempt to deal in the same measure with what is termed redistribution. This is a question of great importance, and I make no apology for detaining the House upon it. The argument for redistribution was on former occasions never treated by us as a contemptible argument, even when we thought it was far wiser to separate the two subjects—I mean in 1866. There was a strong argument then in favour of uniting redistribution with legislation on the franchise, and it was this: that we had even then sought to keep alive broad and vital distinctions between the county and the town constituencies; and as long as these broad and vital distinctions subsisted, there would have been very great inconvenience in a serious separation between legislation on the franchise and legislation on redistribution. For of course by legislation on redistribution two things happen—rural districts that have hitherto been rural districts in law become towns in law, and districts that have hitherto been towns in law, if there be any disfranchisement of however small a constituency, become rural districts in law. Well, in either case under the law that prevailed before 1866, and under the law which has prevailed since then, there would have been a very large change in the franchise, and, in certain cases, there would have been great disfranchisement inflicted had redistribution been left to be dealt with separately from legislation on the franchise, and at that

time our contention was that the best way was to legislate on the franchise, and to follow that legislation at the earliest possible moment with legislation on redistribution. However, that argument was not then successful. But I admit at that time there was a great deal to be said in favour of those who opposed separation. What is to be said in favour of it now? The franchise is not going to be absolutely identical, but it will be within a shade of it. Don't let us conceal that from ourselves. All over the country the occupiers, taken as a whole, will be, if I am right, five-sixths of the whole constituencies. What harm will happen to them supposing you legislate on the franchise now? Supposing through any accident, which I do not expect, this Parliament is prevented from legislating on redistribution, what would be the worst that could happen? Districts now rural might, in another Parliament, become towns. What would be the difference? They would exercise the same occupying franchise in a town instead of exercising it in a county, and their right to vote in the county in respect of a property franchise from within the town they would retain as they have it under the present law. So again, where Parliament found it necessary in any smaller towns to deprive them of the privilege of returning by their sole power representatives to Parliament, those persons would still carry the same occupying franchise which they have heretofore had into the county. So that in fact that argument has practically vanished.

Now let me look at the arguments in favour of separating legislation on the franchise and legislation on redistribution. I have said our measure is incomplete, and that there has never been a complete measure. But our measure is complete in one vital respect, in which no measure heretofore presented to Parliament has been complete. It is absolutely complete as to its area. In our opinion there was an imperative necessity for making it complete as to its area. I for one should be no party to the responsibility of bringing in on this occasion three separate Bills. All the three countries have a case for enfranchisement arising out of the insufficiency of the present constituencies as compared with what they might be; but of the three the strongest is that of Ireland. I could bear no part in the responsibility of passing, perhaps, a Reform Bill for England and, perhaps, a Reform Bill for Scotland, and then leaving a Reform Bill for Ireland to take its chance. I do not wish to rest on my own impression of what would happen. But I have noticed the tone of Conservative organs, and the language of those Conservative organs is in effect that there may be something to be said for extending the franchise in England and in Scotland, but to extend it in Ireland is madness. That is a Conservative organ. That is an indication of what would probably happen, I do not say in this House, but elsewhere. Under these circumstances the necessity of a complete measure in point of area is, I would say, absolute, and nothing will induce us to part with the principle. Next, I would ask the House to consider what it is that we ought really to attempt. What has been the effect of uniting redistribution with franchise legislation since 1832? It has been that the redistribution has been of a trivial character, hardly purchasing a postponement of the question, and in reality and in regard to its broader principles has simply given the question the go-by. Some

people may be innocent enough to think that our opponents are to be conciliated by uniting redistribution with franchise legislation. We had some experience of that matter in 1863, and we found that, confident and sanguine and perhaps a little ferocious as our opponents were before we introduced our Redistribution Bill, when we introduced it their appetites were whetted, became keener than ever, and still more lively was the rush made on every occasion at the unfortunate Bill, until it, and still better the Government which proposed it, were brought to their extinction. In 1867 the number of seats liberated was thirty-eight, and they were liberated by a peculiar process and by leaving a large number of small towns with one member. We have to face the question whether places with 3,000, 4,000, or 5,000 inhabitants are to continue to possess the sole power of returning a representative to Parliament. The uniting of the two descriptions of legislation has resulted formerly in the inefficient handling of redistribution. If redistribution is to be touched at all, it must be touched more broadly.

What will be the effect of introducing a plan of redistribution? It is quite evident we ought to have some regard to what has happened before. There was one effective plan known to Parliament—the plan of 1831–1832. What was the effect of that plan? The effect was two-fold—in the first place it multiplied six-fold the labour of the Reform Bill. In Committee on the Reform Bill there were three nights occupied upon the franchise legislation; twenty-four nights were occupied on redistribution; and the effect of associating redistribution with legislation on the franchise would be to produce at present a result not very different. More than that, the franchise legislation has opponents who find it difficult to show their colours.—Redistribution is their favourite study; but it is impossible not to observe this fact—that of the three political crises produced in connection with reform legislation, every one has been produced by redistribution, and not one by the franchise. A vote on the redistribution of power brought about the defeat of the first Reform Bill, and it brought about a dissolution of Parliament. A vote on the redistribution of power brought about the crisis of the year 1832, which was the most serious crisis known to the country since the Revolution of 1688. It was all brought about by the vote of the House of Lords—not upon the franchise, oh no—it was more convenient to deal with the question of redistribution. The crisis of 1866 involved no consequences more serious than the displacement of one Government and the introduction of another Government, which in the following year introduced a Bill establishing the principle of household suffrage. I only refer to it because it comes under the definition of a crisis. To take the two Bills together would be to place on ourselves a multitude of provisions and a complexity of legislation such as we know would make it impracticable for us under the present condition of Parliamentary business to have the smallest hope of passing into law. There is one reason which is not unimportant—a practical reason, and that is that it is quite impossible, until we have the new franchise legislation, to form any just idea of the limits of the new redistribution. That, however, I need not dwell upon, but there is another reason which goes to the root of the matter, and it is this—the union of franchise legislation with redistribu-

tion makes a confusion of things that ought to be kept sedulously apart. I will tell you why. The question of the franchise is a large and national one, and ought to be determined upon Imperial considerations. I take it there is no doubt about that. Is redistribution a question that is only determined upon Imperial and national considerations? Of course the question of redistribution raises up local feeling, and what may be described without offence as a selfish feeling. The effect of that is this, that, where the two measures are mixed together, those who think their local interests are touched by the measures, oppose the extension of the franchise for fear of the redistribution which is to follow. The consequence is that they decide the great Imperial question of the franchise on grounds which are sectional and local, if not selfish. It appears to me that that is a political objection of a very grave description indeed. These reasons seem to me to be more than sufficient to justify and to compel us to decline the responsibility for any measure which should combine redistribution with extension of the franchise.

Now what do I admit? I admit that legislation on redistribution ought to follow legislation on the franchise at an early date, *aye*—at the earliest date—and the earliest date will be next Session; and it is for that reason we have brought forward the Franchise Bill of 1884 in order that within the natural life of the present Parliament there may be plenty of time to deal with the question. Of course I mean if we have the permission of hon. members opposite. Perhaps you may say, “Tell us your plan.” Well, sir, we do not intend to walk into any trap. And in my opinion there can be no greater mistake than for a Government, which is not going to legislate immediately on redistribution, and cannot legislate upon it during the Session, to give its view on the subject.

“A LITTLE SKETCH.”

The only substitute I can offer is a very humble one. I have not the least objection to make a little sketch of my own views upon redistribution, and although I cannot commit my colleagues absolutely to them, yet I certainly would say this, that I would not submit them if I believed them to be vitally in conflict with any of the opinions they entertain. I need not detain the House long with them, but I will just run through the main features. In the first place I think when a measure of redistribution comes, as it may come, I hope, next year, in order that it may have that sort of relative finality to which we ought always to look forward, especially when organic changes are in question, it must be a large measure of redistribution. I do not know whether it need be so large as the measure of 1831, which, of course, effected a wholesale slaughter of nominally existing boroughs and constituencies in this country; but at any rate it must be nearer the measure of 1831 than the one of 1867 in order to attain its object. At the same time I am not personally at all favourable to what is called the system of electoral districts, or to the adoption of any pure population scale. I cannot pretend to have the fear and horror which some people have with regard to the consequences of electoral districts. My objection is a very simple and

practical one. In the first place electoral districts would involve a great deal of unnecessary displacement and disturbance of traditions, which, I think, you ought to respect. But my second objection is—and I regard it as a very important one—that I don't believe that public opinion at all requires it, and I doubt whether it would warrant it. Next I should say that in a sound measure of redistribution the distinction between town and country, known to electoral law as borough and shire, ought to be maintained. Although our franchise is nearly identical, that is not the question. The question is whether there is not in pursuits and associations, and in social circumstances, a difference between town and country, between borough and shire, which it is expedient, becoming, and useful to maintain. Now, sir, I do not think we ought to have any absolute population scale. I would respect within moderate limits the individuality of constituencies, and I would not attempt to place towns which have had representation for many generations precisely and mathematically upon the footing of towns that have not.

IRISH REPRESENTATION UNTOUCHED.

There is another principle to which I would call attention. I am certainly disposed to admit that very large and closely-concentrated populations need not have, and perhaps ought not to have, quite so high a proportional share in the representation of the country as rural and dispersed populations, because the actual political power in these concentrated masses is sharper, quicker, and more vehement. That consideration, of course, would apply most of all to the Metropolis. Another proposition I would lay down is this—I would not reduce the proportional share of representation accorded by the present law to Ireland. In the case of Ireland, as in the case of some other parts of the country, in my opinion some regard ought to be had to relative nearness and distance. Take Scotland, for example: the nearest part of it is 350 miles off, and some parts of it are between 600 and 700 miles off. It is impossible to say that numerical representation meets the case, though I grant it is pretty well made up for by the shrewdness of the men whom Scotland sends; but it is her virtue and good fortune which cause her to make so excellent a choice. Undoubtedly, however, the representation is exercised under great difficulties, and it is fair that those parts of the country which like Scotland and Ireland are separated by great distances, not omitting the element of sea, should be more liberally dealt with in proportion to the representatives they ought to send. Well, sir, that is pretty nearly all I have to say, excepting one other proposition which I am disposed to lay down with considerable hesitation, and not as giving a final opinion. Speaking roughly, what will happen will be this. Smaller boroughs, so many of which are in the South of England, must yield seats for London and other great towns, for the counties, and, thirdly, for Scotland and the North of England, which have perhaps the largest and most salient of all these claims. The prospect of that operation certainly suggests a proposition, if under the altered circumstances of Parliament and its increasing business Parliament were disposed to entertain it, but which it has not yet favourably entertained, and I think ought not to entertain unless for grave cause, for a limited

addition to the number of its members. I ask no assent of the House to that proposition. All I say is, I do not exclude it from the view of the whole circumstances of the case ; and it may be found materially to ease the operation, which is one, taken altogether, of no slight magnitude and difficulty. Finally, when redistribution has come forward, then will be the proper time for considering all the propositions with regard to minority representation and with regard to modes of voting. These very important subjects will have to be fully considered, but I myself see no cause to change the opinion I have always entertained with regard to them. I admit they have claims which ought to receive the full and impartial consideration of Parliament.

Before sitting down I wish to make two appeals. One is an appeal to gentlemen whom I am afraid I cannot class as friends, and more particularly to the right hon. gentleman (Sir J. Hay) who has given notice of the first amendment. He knows my sentiments on that subject. It is impossible to entertain the question of redistribution at all without including in a measure a liberal enlargement of the number of members accorded to Scotland. If we are called upon to set aside this Bill to make that assertion, which is totally unnecessary, we may equally well be called upon to make any other assertion. We then come to the amendment of the hon. member for Knarborough (Mr. T. Collins) ; it is one of those motions which might be multiplied by the score, and of which it is too obvious the object is to say we will not entertain your Bill, we will not consider it. Then comes the motion of the hon. member for Stafford (Mr. Salt). That is a distinct refusal. He proposes to the House distinctly to refuse to entertain the subject recommended by the initiative of the Government and the Crown. The House has never taken such a course. The House has upon very rare occasions indeed entertained motions analogous to that of the right hon. gentleman, that is to say, touching the subject matter even of measures recommended in the Queen's Speech ; but that has been extremely rare, and I submit to the House that it is rather hard that after more than a hundred persons have been allowed upon their own authority and recommendation to bring Bills into the House of Commons without resistance, that the Speech from the Throne on the responsibility of the Government, recommending in the most prominent manner the subject of Parliamentary reform to the consideration of Parliament, is to be met for the first time in our history by an absolute refusal to entertain the subject at all, and by setting up other reasons which, in the opinion of the hon. member, are reasons why the recommendations from the Throne should be contemptuously trodden down. That is my appeal to the opponents of the measure.

APPEAL TO REFORMERS.

But I have the strongest appeal to make to its friends. I entreat them not to endanger the Bill by additions. This Bill is in no danger from direct opposition. It has some danger to encounter from indirect opposition ; but of these dangers from indirect opposition, I for one am not afraid, unless they be aggravated by the addition of dangers which it may have to encounter from friendship. For I do not hesitate to say

that it is just as possible for friends to destroy the measure by additions which it will not bear, as it is for enemies. If I may presume to tender advice, it is this : Ask yourselves whether the measure is worth having. What does it do, and what does it do in comparison with what has been done before ? In 1832 there was passed what was considered a Magna Charta of British liberties ; but that Magna Charta of British liberties added, according to the previous estimate of Lord John Russell, half a million, while according to the results considerably less than half a million were added, to the entire constituency of the three countries. After 1832 we come to 1866. At that time the total constituency of the United Kingdom reached 1,364,000. By the Bills which were passed between 1867 and 1869 that number was raised to 2,448,000. And now, sir, under the action of the present law the constituency has reached in round numbers what I would call 3,000,000. I will not enter into details ; but what is the increase we are going to make ? There is a basis of computation, but it is a basis which affords, I admit, ground for conjecture and opinion. That basis of computation is the present ratio in towns, between inhabited houses and the number of town electors. Of course we have availed ourselves of that basis for the purpose of computation. I have gone into the matter as carefully as I can, and the best results I can attain are these. The Bill, if it passes as presented, will add to the English constituency over 1,300,000 persons. It will add to the Scotch constituency, Scotland being at present rather better provided for in this respect than either of the other countries, over 200,000, and to the Irish constituency over 400,000, or in the main to the present aggregate constituency of the United Kingdom, taken at 3,000,000, it will add 2,000,000 more, nearly twice as much as was added since 1867, and more than four times as much as was added in 1832. Surely, I say, that is worth doing, that is worth not endangering. Surely that is worth some sacrifice.

This is a measure with results such as I have ventured to sketch them that ought to bring home to the mind of every man favourable to the extension of popular liberty, the solemn question what course he is to pursue in regard to it. *I hope the House will look at it as the Liberal party in 1831 looked at the Reform Bill of that date, and determined that they would waive criticism of minute details, that they would waive particular preferences and predilections, and would look at the broad scope and general effect of the measure.* Do that upon this occasion. It is a Bill worth having, and if it is worth having, again I say it is a Bill worth your not endangering. Let us enter into no byways which would lead us off the path marked out straight before us : let us not wander on the hill-tops of speculation ; let us not wander into the morasses and fogs of doubt. We are firm in the faith that enfranchisement is a good, that the people may be trusted—that the voters under the Constitution are the strength of the Constitution. What we want in order to carry this Bill, considering as I fully believe that the very large majority of this country are favourable to its principle—what we want in order to carry it is union and union only. What will endanger it is disunion and disunion only. Let us hold firmly together and success will crown our effort. You will, as much as any former Parliament that

has conferred great legislative benefits on the nation, have your reward, and

“Read your history in a nation’s eyes,”

for you will have deserved it by the benefits you will have conferred. You will have made this strong nation stronger still, stronger by its closer union without ; stronger against its foes, if and when it has any foes without ; stronger within by union between class and class, and by arraying all classes and all portions of the community in one solid, compacted mass round the ancient throne which it has loved so well, and round a Constitution now to be more than ever powerful, and more than ever free.

THE VOTE OF CREDIT.

(*IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 27, 1885.*)

I WILL, sir, endeavour to explain as clearly as I can the nature and grounds of the vote, which we now submit, trusting to the indulgence of the Committee, because I am conscious—I have, I am sorry to say, for months past been conscious—of an habitual hoarseness which may make the function of listening very disagreeable and irksome.

I trust that the Committee, at least in some degree, now understand that, if there is anything unusual in the nature and character of this vote, it arises, not out of a caprice of ours, still less out of an unmanly intention of avoiding controversial debate adverse to ourselves, but out of the nature of the case. We have before us a case, sir, for which in a material point there is no precedent known to me. We propose a vote of credit amounting to eleven millions of money ; six millions and a-half being likely to be spent in what we term “special preparations,” and being secured from being spent for any other purposes : four and a half millions being likely to be spent in and in connection with the Soudan, but being in a degree that I cannot at present define capable of being spent for another purpose—that is to say, the same purpose as our special preparations. And I ask leave of the Committee to repeat my words, that, adhering to the policy we have announced to the House of holding the Soudan forces available for service elsewhere, I believe that we have had absolutely no option except either to ask the House to vote money which may be wanted in the Soudan, with the power to use it for the purpose of the special preparations, or else to vote twice over a very large and uncertain sum of money, to which course, I believe, strong and just and even insurmountable objection might be taken. Moreover I

will point out that, until it is shown that there is some other course open to us, the objection with regard to the special nature of this vote entirely falls to the ground and is worthless.

Sir, the peculiarity in the case to which I refer is, of course, this: I know of no instance, either in or beyond my own recollection, since the financial system of this House was well developed (and, indeed, it hardly had come to be thoroughly developed when I first became a member of this House), in which it has been the duty of the Government to propose to the House at one and the same time two very large sums of money for military purposes, one of which, the second, may run into the first, although the first is not to run into the second. We ask it upon this ground: It is essentially bound up with the policy of holding the large force now in the Soudan available for transfer and for service elsewhere. That is the justification of the course which I agree with my hon. friend, the member for Cambridge (Mr. W. Fowler), should be taken upon no ground except that of strong necessity, and of making the best choice we can between rival inconveniences. I certainly, for one, would never have dreamed of taking it on any other ground, and I believe that I am speaking for my colleagues when I so speak.

It is thought by some that we take this course because it evades a vote of censure upon us on account of our policy in the Soudan. It appears to be assumed that it would have been competent to members of the Committee to say, first of all, that they would give us the money for special preparations, and, secondly, give us the money for the Soudan vote, but that in giving the money for the Soudan vote they would combine with it a vote of censure upon the Government. Sir, I believe that it would not have been competent, either in point of form or in point of substance, for the Committee to have taken that course. I do not think that it is upon record that an attempt has ever been made to take such a course. This the Committee may do with perfect consistency—they may give the money for the Soudan, founding that vote on the necessity which has been created, and they may reserve to themselves the discretion of censuring the Government, notwithstanding that they have voted the money. Surely that doctrine is sound, because, otherwise, why vote the money for the special preparations until you are satisfied that in everything which touches them we deserve your approval? I do not suppose that you are quite prepared to affirm, as one gentleman has declared to-night, that we and not Russia are responsible for the difficulty in which we stand. Another hon. gentleman cheers, so that there are two persons, at any rate, who will be in the predicament of either refusing money for special preparations or else of being content to reserve to themselves for some future occasion the power which they undoubtedly possess, and may very legitimately exercise, of censuring us for the wrong principles upon which we have proceeded, or for the want of judgment with which we have endeavoured to apply the right principles.

There appears to be a mistaken idea pervading the minds of young members of this House, and, indeed, of some old ones, that the granting of a vote of credit which it is not intended to refuse is an usual occasion

for bringing the Government to trial upon matters to which the vote relates.

Lord R. CHURCHILL.—Your party did it in 1878.

THE VOTE OF 1878.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I am very much obliged to the noble lord. My memory goes back to 1878, and it goes back somewhat further. I do not bring forward a proposition of this kind without being prepared to examine and to stand by it. As the noble lord challenges me to begin with that extraordinary precedent, I may say that we had in 1878 a vote of credit proposed to this House which is without parallel in our history. We fought that vote of credit upon principle. We objected to the most dangerous precedent then established. We objected to the purpose which it had in view. I will on this occasion save hon. members the trouble of doing what they are fond of doing—of paying me the compliment of quoting me—and I will quote myself. Someone said to-night, “I wish the right hon. gentleman would read the speech he made in 1878.” It was a most unkind wish. He could not have doomed me to a task more irksome and unacceptable; but, anticipating what was likely to happen, I was beforehand with the hon. member, and I do not think there is one word which in the same circumstances I should not be ready to repeat. I hope the noble lord will, when any former speeches of his are referred to, be always in a position to quote them with as much security. On that occasion I ventured to say:—

“So far as I know, there is no case where a Conference of the Powers of Europe has been called together, where those Powers, as a preliminary to its assembling have increased, or taken powers to increase, their naval and military establishments.”

I believe no novelty more astounding in form and in substance is to be found than the astonishing proposal that, when the Powers of Europe were about peacefully to meet for purposes of the highest deliberation, to be conducted by pacific means, in the common interest, and with the highest authority in the civilised world, that peaceful meeting was to be disturbed by the clash of arms, and that one of the Governments which are to take part in the proceedings of that assembly is to spend six millions in military preparations for the sake, forsooth, of strengthening its hands.

Mr. ASHMEAD-BARTLETT.—What about Alexandria?

Mr. GLADSTONE.—Interruptions of that kind are totally irrelevant, and are hardly compatible with the decencies of this House. If it be true that on this occasion, with respect to the money we ask for the Soudan, there is a disposition to refuse it upon principle—if the case is really analogous to that of 1878, when our desire was not to grant one farthing of those £8,000,000 for what we deemed to be unlawful and evil purposes—if that parallel prevail, by all means let opposition be made to what we now propose in whatever way you may like to make it. But I understand, on the contrary, that you are prepared to vote the money, and it is upon that supposition that I argue. It appears to be said that we asked for information. What information had we given us?

I hold all the information given, and it was this, as I summed it up at the time :—

“I have heard a great deal said about the vote of £6,000,000 being intended to strengthen the hands of the Government, to protect British interests, and to put us on a footing with other Powers.”

I should like to know, after receiving information such as that, in what point were we one jot the wiser? We knew nothing of what was to be done. We knew nothing of the Salisbury-Schouvaloff agreement. We knew nothing of secret covenants with other Powers although the Powers of Europe were to be assembled in Council. We knew nothing of Anglo-Turkish treaties; we knew nothing of the occupation and administration of Cyprus in particular, to be taken in defiance of the Treaty of Paris and the law of Europe. All these things were concealed. These were the matters on which we ought to have had information, and if we had had it I am not sure that even the last Parliament would really have voted the £6,000,000. But, sir, undoubtedly, if that is the sort of information that you want we can give it: we want the hands of the Government strengthened, we want British interests protected, we want British honour guarded. All these generalities, which were all that we extracted from you upon a former occasion, we are ready to return; but we have not the audacity to pretend that, in paying you off with such coin as that, we think we are really giving you political information.

PRECEDENTS.

Sir, the fact is that, so far as I am aware, it has not been the practice of this House to choose votes of credit as occasions for general discussion of the matter to which they refer. I will appeal in support of what I have said to the evidence of facts. There are certain occasions which I will not quote, because if we were in the middle of a great war like the Crimean War, and after providing so many millions for the Navy and so many for the Army, my right hon. friend (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) were to demand a vote of credit over and above, there then could be no occasion for discussion, for the policy of the war must be a thing notorious to, and accepted by, the House and the country. Votes of credit of that kind may be given without discussion. I will take another case when it was not so. It was a vote of credit proposed when I was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Indeed, it was a double vote of credit proposed in 1860 for the purposes of the China War. We began on the 16th of March by proposing a vote of £850,000. The hour was late, and the necessity was great. There was no statement, and no debate. There was merely a protest made that the vote was only allowed to pass on account of the great urgency of time in connection with our financial needs. On the 19th the vote was reported in the regular mode, and debate arose. But the debate which did arise was entirely upon military detail and nothing else; and, although undoubtedly that vote was upon a very serious subject of policy—a subject which required discussion, and which obtained discussion—it was not discussed on the occasion of the vote. In the month of July we had to

propose, unfortunately, a very much larger vote for purposes connected with the same expedition. In that month what happened was this: We had sent to China in the interval certain offers of peace. These offers had failed. Military operations became necessary, and we had to ask for no less than £3,356,000 on the 12th of July. Again there was no statement of policy in connection with it. There was, again, a military debate. Late in the evening, Sir John Pakington—not Mr. Disraeli, who demanded no discussion upon it—said he would like, at the end of the speech, a fuller explanation as to the definite objects of the war; and Lord Russell, in the space of a very few minutes, said he thought that the right hon. gentleman, belonging to the former Government, was as much responsible for the war as the Government then in office, and that the terms of peace then offered were quite reasonable. So that there was no discussion on either of those occasions—practically no discussion and no arraignment of the Government.

But, sir, it may be said, and said truly, that the war was going on. Therefore, I will quote a case which will amply make good what I have said, and when no war was going on. This was the case of the vote of credit which it was my duty to propose when I was Prime Minister in 1870. It was a vote of £2,000,000 of money. On the 1st of August Mr. Disraeli raised a debate on the critical state of affairs on the continent of Europe. It was in the course of that debate that I stated the intention of the Government to ask for a vote of credit without defining the purposes of the vote further than this—not very much unlike the information we got in 1878. I said:—

“We are neutrals in the war. We are on terms of unequivocal friendship with both the parties, and our object is to maintain a dignified and friendly position.”

That, sir, was the statement made by me on the part of the Government on the 1st of August. On the 2nd of August, no war existing, we being in no way a party to any quarrel, being in no difficulty and no danger—though we had an object in view, of which the House was aware, like the public, in a general way—we asked the House, without a word of statement, for the £2,000,000, and without a word of objection it was given. On the 8th of August Earl Granville produced a Treaty in the House of Lords, and I produced a Treaty in the House of Commons which we had concluded with a view to the neutrality of Belgium. Some discussion then took place. Mr. Disraeli, in particular, said that he thought the proceeding was a good and a manly proposal. There was a general concurrence in the House, and such short debate as took place was not of a contentious character. But what I am contending is that that debate occurred a week after the vote of credit. The vote of credit had nothing to do with it, and the circumstances in which the vote of credit was proposed were again deemed to be circumstances which made it wise not to choose that moment for a general discussion on the merits of the question.

Well now, sir, what is the present case? I am not at all surprised that gentlemen in this House should say that the Government are censurable in their determination to ask no money in the present vote for

the prosecution of offensive operations in Egypt. I think that is a question of a dignity and order perfectly warranting the conduct of anyone who may think fit to call the attention of the House to it at a proper time; and if any vote of censure is to be moved on the Government for such a purpose from the proper source, and with proper authority, it will have from us every proper attention and accommodation. We shall give every opportunity for its being discussed, whatever its issue is to be. But what we wish to do now is simply to make understood the purposes of this vote, and to give the opportunity which it has been the custom of the House to use, though I do not wish to tie it down to that custom, for discussing the military provisions which it is the object of the vote to make. The first thing we ask is a vote of four and a-half millions for the Soudan, as being likely to be spent in the Soudan, but with the plain declaration, which is the basis on our part of the whole of these proceedings, that as far as we are concerned, and quite apart from any wider opinions that any of us may entertain against the proceedings in the Soudan, we are all determined, so far as we are concerned, that the Soudan shall not, by anything hereafter to be done, offer an impediment to the full discharge of the duties of the Empire, with the whole purpose and the whole power of the Empire, in whatever quarter of the world they may happen to lie. For this reason, avowedly and undisguisedly, we ask you to give us this money because the troops are now in the Soudan. We cannot say how much of it may be spent there, because it is possible that none of it may be spent there, except in connection with certain specified objects there or for bringing the men home. We ask you distinctly to give it to us with an unfettered discretion to apply it elsewhere for higher purposes and for higher duties, if necessary. I hope that is intelligible, and I hope that will not be mixed up with any question of technical fidelity to rules for voting money which on every ordinary occasion we are most desirous strictly and rigorously to maintain.

With regard to the Soudan portion of this vote, explaining it as I have now explained it, the state of the case is this: I have nothing of a substantial character to add to what I stated on the 20th of April, when, on the part of the Government, and in words agreed upon with and by my colleagues, I said that we had found it necessary to review the whole situation of the Empire, and that we considered the time to be one at which it was necessary to hold its entire resources well in hand for use and for application wherever they might be wanted. If the Committee do not agree with that proposition, let them reject the proposal we now make. If the Committee do agree in the proposal, they may canvass, they may criticise, they may censure, they may expel and eject the present Government, if they like, and most welcome they will be; but they cannot withhold from us the money which we ask. I wish broadly to draw this distinction between the granting of the money on a vote of credit which we ask, and the reservation of the amplest liberty on the part of the House to discuss the merits of the question, and to visit upon the heads of responsible and guilty Ministers a vote of censure, or whatever penalty they may deserve.

At the same time, while that is really the substance of the proposition

that I make on the part of the Government as the basis of this plan, the Committee may naturally remind me that it is not the first declaration made this year on the subject of the Soudan. On the 19th of February, when the House met, I made a declaration on behalf of my colleagues not less formal, not less binding, than that to which I have now referred. I therefore go back to the 19th of February and the discussion of that evening, and to the decisions which at that time I announced to the House as having been taken by the Cabinet, and having received the sanction of Her Majesty. When on the 4th of February we heard of the betrayal of Khartoum, the Cabinet was of course summoned, and it was gathered together next day. The desire of the Cabinet at that time was to endeavour to prevent the spreading of the disturbance, to do everything that could be done on behalf of General Gordon, if he were alive—and at that time we had no means of judging whether he was alive or not, or even whether he was continuing resistance or not—and if possible, of course, to go forward at once to the accomplishment of the purpose of Lord Wolseley's expedition. That was our starting point. As I stated on the 19th of February, Lord Wolseley pointed out to us that we must move forward from that starting point. There were, he told us, two plans of military operations, one based on the idea of taking Khartoum, and the other based upon the abandonment of that object. We thought, sir, that we were not justified, under the circumstances of the hour, in the abandonment of that idea; and we therefore adopted the plan pointed out by Lord Wolseley, which was meant to reserve to us a full discretion upon the facts as they then stood before us to go forward to Khartoum at a later period, presuming it to be impracticable to effect its capture immediately, and presuming, of course, that Parliament should be found disposed to sanction such a plan, and that we ourselves, on further consideration, should find reason still to adhere to it. On that ground we founded the statement that I made on the 19th of February, and retained to ourselves in full the power to march to Khartoum.

THE MAHDI.

I referred at that time to various circumstances, and I think that, upon an impartial view, or upon any intelligent view, it must be admitted that many of those circumstances have since that period undergone serious change. In the first place, the heroic General Gordon, we know, has sealed his purpose with his blood. Of that we had no knowledge whatever at the time when we came to the decisions of, I think, the 6th of February. We saw at that time, as the world saw, an indefinite but possibly a very great danger in the effect that might be produced both upon Egypt and with regard to the defence of Egypt, and likewise in other quarters of the East, by a simple policy of retirement in the face of a triumphant pretender to the dignity of a prophet. The Mahdi was then triumphant, and his position was a very grave fact in the case before us. That position is greatly altered. In the flush of his triumph he attempted to move down the river, but not many days were required to show to him the vanity of that operation. He retired to Khartoum. He has retired from Khartoum. He is at-

tacked in his own sent. Left to themselves and not immediately menaced by us, a rival or rivals have started up, and the Mahdi is not the formidable character that he was in the first week of February. As to the defence of Egypt, sir, we in no way relax the obligations under which we hold ourselves to stand. In my announcement last Monday on the part of my colleagues we declared that we held to that duty, as we had held to it before. As respects the general effect upon the East of the betrayal of Khartoum, what we had then to contemplate was that if we had ordered a retirement of our forces—a retirement accompanied with general inaction in the East—we should have had to compute the probable or possible effect, not in Egypt only, but beyond Egypt—throughout the East and in the Indian Empire—of that retirement. That was the alternative before us then. I could almost wish it were the alternative before us now; but it is not so; and the policy that is necessary in the existing circumstances, which I shall say nothing to exaggerate or to worsen—the policy that is before us now is of necessity a policy of preparatory action in the East, which puts wholly out of view any apprehensions that either a timorous or a prudent man might have entertained in the first week of February in connection with possible moral effects of the betrayal of Khartoum, and the apparent triumph of the Mahdi.

There were other smaller, or rather, narrower considerations, although very far indeed from being unimportant. I mentioned to the House at that time that there were several topics which we were unwilling summarily to brush aside; though we did not bind ourselves to do anything beyond what might be found reasonable and practicable in regard to them. One of them, though I did not give it a very prominent place, was whether the possession of Khartoum would enable us to impose a serious check upon the prosecution of the Slave trade. I may say that an examination does not at all tend to show that the possession of Khartoum would have any vital or any very appreciable influence on that evil traffic. A very important consideration, both at that moment and throughout the whole of last year, was this—to whom did General Gordon hold himself bound in honour at Khartoum? General Gordon was under the belief, and that belief we derived from his telegrams, sporadic as they unfortunately were from the necessity of the case, that a large portion of the population of Khartoum were deeply bound up with him in interest and feeling, and that their fate was dependent upon his. But the evidence positive and negative before us—what we have heard and what we have not heard, connected with the betrayal of Khartoum—does not, so far as it goes, support that belief of General Gordon. What is quite plain is this, that with his heroic character and his extraordinary gifts he exercised a power of fascination upon a few of the natives and soldiers who were in personal contact with him, and there is much reason to suppose that he mistook that for a general attachment of the soldiers, and even for something more. We have no reason to suppose that any considerable body ever attached themselves to him, and we have no reason to suppose that the general population of Khartoum—though I have no doubt some of the immediate adherents suffered in their lives or fortunes—suffered by what has taken place,

There was, further, a consideration with respect to the establishment of a government at Khartoum; but there again we are not entitled to assert of our own knowledge or conviction that the government of Khartoum is at this moment worse than it was four or five years ago. As regards the Egyptian garrisons, one or two of the smaller garrisons have quite recently been relieved, and the principal garrisons hold their ground. We are not able to say what is their exact condition, what are the motives of their present conduct. We are not able to say that it is not in their power, if they cease to represent Egyptian supremacy in the Soudan, to leave the country. That is a question on which we can give no positive opinion. We never have admitted that we were bound to use the forces and sacrifice the blood and the treasure of England in the heart of the Soudan for the relief of those garrisons whom we did not send there, and with whose despatch we had no concern whatever. Though we should have been very glad, had it been in our power, to assist them in removal, it would have been a piece of guilt and folly were we to make that a capital object of our policy, and to expend British life and treasure in relieving them. This is only a reference to changes or modifications of circumstances, but I shall say no more on the Soudan. I go back upon my main proposition.

AN IMPERIAL POLICY.

That proposition is that it is a paramount duty incumbent upon us to hold our forces in the Soudan available for service wherever the call of duty and honour may summon them in the service of the British Empire. I have heard with great satisfaction the assurances of hon. gentlemen opposite that they are disposed to forward in every way the grant of funds to us, to be used, as we best think, for the maintenance of what I have upon former occasions described as a "National and Imperial policy." Certainly, an adequate sense of our obligations to our Indian Empire has never yet been claimed by any party in this country as its exclusive inheritance. In my opinion, he would be guilty of a moral offence and gross political folly who should endeavour to claim, on behalf of his own party, any superiority in that respect over those to whom he is habitually opposed. It is an Imperial policy in which we are engaged.

With respect to this vote, I have, indeed, heard comments upon the smallness of the vote. But it is the largest vote of credit that has been asked, as far as I know, within the last seventy years, unless it were in the time of the Crimean war. What I wish to observe is this, that the vote is a little larger than it looks, because while it is stated at six and a-half millions, in the first place, it is contemporaneous with a large increase of charge in the annual estimates for the army and navy, dealt with by the House in the course of its regular duty. In the second place, possibly, and more or less probably, it contemplates receiving a considerable addition from the other branch of this vote of four and a-half millions which we have put down as likely to be spent in the Soudan; and thirdly, and more important than either of these two items, which I do not hold to be trivial, it must be borne in mind that this case is primarily an Indian case of military preparations. Those

who want to know what is the total amount of effort now going forward, and the total amount of the charge likely to be entailed by the present preparations upon the subjects of Her Majesty, would require to know, which we certainly do not yet know—what will be the cost of the vigorous and effective measures which, as we hope and believe, are being taken in India, to enable the Government of that country to meet its share of the present obligations.

A demand for information is always a plausible demand, often a reasonable demand, never a demand to be treated with anything but respect. Let us consider what is the present position and what is the mode of conduct on the part of the Government adapted to that position. It is not a case of war. There is no war before us, actually, or I may even say, perhaps, proximately—although I am slow to deal with epithets that are, of course, liable to some latitude of interpretation. I am not called upon to define, and I should find much difficulty in defining, inasmuch as it does not depend upon any choice of mine or my colleagues, the degree of danger that may be before us. We labour, we have laboured, and shall continue to labour, for an honourable settlement by pacific means. One thing I will venture to say with regard to that sad contingency of an outbreak of war, or a rupture of relations between two great Powers like Russia and England—one thing I will say with great strength of conviction, and great earnestness in my endeavour to impress it upon the Committee, and it is this: we will strive to conduct ourselves to the end of this diplomatic controversy in such a way as that, if, unhappily, it is to end in violence or rupture, we may at least be able to challenge the verdict of civilised mankind, upon a review of the correspondence, upon a review of the demands made and refusals given, to say whether we have, or whether we have not, done all that men could do by every just and honourable effort to prevent the plunging of two such countries, with all the millions that own their sway, into bloodshed and strife, of which it might be difficult to foresee the close.

A CASE OF PREPARATION.

In my opinion, the question before the Committee at this moment—not the final question—but the question at this moment is a simple, I might say even a narrow question, though in itself a great and important question. What we present to you is a case for preparation. Is there, or is there not, a case for preparation? Look at the facts before you. Try them by that test and by no other. Do not let us urge our own foregone conclusions about the misconduct of Russia or anyone else; do not let us enter into the judicial part of the case—only into that part of it which is prudential. Upon that aspect of the case, and upon that alone, asking for no credit as to the future and no acquittal as to the past, we say it is a case for preparation. All the facts that are within your knowledge are enough to make it your bounden duty so to prepare. Therefore, sir, if I am asked for more information, my answer is this—it is impossible for us to give you full information. We could not, at this moment, open up the correspondence that has been going on. We could not lay before you the unsifted information, still less the

rumours, that have reached us. We could not enable you, by any possibility, to judge of a question that has not yet reached a state of maturity for judgment. The evidence is not complete. The development is simply going forward. Do not let us too sanguinely count on a favourable issue. At the same time do not let us despair that reason and justice may, on both sides, prevail over narrower and more unworthy feelings. We cannot give all the information we possess. If we did give it, it would not place you in a position for conclusive judgment. Were we to give part, we should infallibly mislead you ; and, therefore, we stand simply upon what is patent and notorious, and say that, on those patent and notorious facts with which the whole world is acquainted as well as we are, there is a case, and abundant case, for preparation.

Now, sir, in order to show that I do not speak wholly without book shall I, in a very few moments before I sit down, sketch rudely and slightly an outline of those patent and notorious facts ? The starting-point of our movement in this case is our obligation of honour to the Ameer of Afghanistan. He stands between us and any other consideration of policy or of danger. Our obligations to him are not absolute. We are not obliged—God forbid that we should ever be obliged—to defend him, or to defend anybody else, were he misled into a course of tyranny against the just resentment of his subjects. We are not bound, contrary to our just duty, to sustain him, even in a course of folly. We are bound by no such obligation ; but we have a contingent obligation to give him our aid and support ; and I think everyone who hears me will say that that obligation should be fulfilled in no stinted manner, if it really be a living obligation, contingent only upon this one condition, that his conduct is such as we can honestly approve. That is the present condition of affairs in connection with the Ameer of Afghanistan.

I have stated distinctly to the House that there have been full communications between him and the Viceroy, and that the language which he holds, and the principles which he announces, are those which absolutely entitle him to call upon us in concert and in council with him, acting for him and, as far as we can, acting with him, to protect him in the possession of his just rights. Well, sir, in this view a plan was framed for the delimitation of the frontier between himself and what was until yesterday Turkoman territory, but has now become by a rapid process Russian territory. I am not about to enter into any invidious comment. We have made, under the force of circumstances, very rapid progress ourselves in various quarters of the world, and the idea which, beyond all, I desire to carry along with me in every step of this painful and anxious process, is a determination to make every allowance and every concession to those with whom we are dealing that we should claim, and that we should expect for ourselves. Therefore, I only say this territory has rapidly become Russian, and Russia, as the head of this Turkoman country, is now in immediate contact with Afghanistan. A plan was framed for the delimitation of the frontier. That plan has, unhappily, been intercepted in the sense that it has not yet taken effect in action. The question of the delays in the progress of that plan is a question that may have to be carefully examined hereafter. I am not

about to examine these delays now. I am not about to make them in any way a matter of charge, but I must point out the injurious effect that they have had in practice; for they led to advances—to military advances upon debated ground that were obviously, and on the face of them, and in a high degree dangerous—dangerous to peace, dangerous to goodwill, dangerous to the future settlement of the question.

A SOLEMN COVENANT.

Aware of those dangers, we set ourselves to work to bring about an agreement with the government of Russia, by which we hoped they might in a great degree be neutralised. That agreement was concluded on the 16th of March, although it has passed by the date of the 17th of March, inasmuch as, I think, that was the day on which it was telegraphed by Sir Ronald Thomson to Sir Peter Lumsden. The Committee will perhaps recollect the substance of that agreement and my announcement of it in this House. It made a deep impression on my mind. The agreement consisted of a covenant and of a reservation. The covenant was that the Russian troops should not advance nor attack provided the Afghan troops did not advance nor attack. That was the covenant. There followed the reservation, and the reservation was "unless in the case of some extraordinary accident, such as a disturbance in Penj-deh." I well recollect the feeling which the reading of that reservation created in the House. The same feeling had been created in our own minds before we announced it in the House. It was obvious that we were just as much entitled to insert reservations on our side. I only now refer to this matter in order to exhibit, as well as I can without injustice, the spirit in which we have endeavoured to proceed—a spirit of liberal construction and interpretation wherever we thought we could apply it without sacrifice of honour or duty. I think it will be admitted that exception might have been taken to that reservation as covering God knows how many and what contingencies, had we been disposed to examine it in a spirit of cavilling or of criticism. But we determined to give credit for its having been conceived—yes, we thought it our duty and we acted upon that duty—to take it as conceived in honour and good faith. We so construed it, and I do not repent having so construed it. I do not say that the construction is shown to have been wrong, but, come what may, I shall not repent having put that construction upon it. However, it was so taken, and I am bound to say that, although I think the House was somewhat startled by the reservation, it was generally, and I believe wisely, accepted by the House as a binding covenant. Sir, it was a very solemn covenant. It was a covenant involving great issues. There were thousands of men on the one side and on the other—on the one side standing for what they thought their country, on the other side standing for what they thought likewise their patriotic duty, standing in the face of one another without a definite cause to contend for, but placed in a position of dangerous contiguity, and with the peril of bloody collision. This engagement came in to stand between the living and the dead, to stand between the danger and the people who were exposed to it, and we hoped and we believed that it would be recog-

nised as one of the most sacred covenants ever made between two great nations with the strictest fidelity, and that if, unhappily, a deviation occurred there would be a generous rivalry between the two Powers to search it out to the bottom and to exhibit to the world how that deviation had come about, and who was the person, or who were the persons on whom lay the responsibility. All this, sir, remains in suspense.

"WE CANNOT CLOSE THE BOOK."

What has happened? A bloody engagement on the 30th of March followed the covenant of the 16th. I shall overstate nothing. At least I shall not purposely overstate anything. I hope I shall not inadvertently overstate anything. All I shall say is this—that that woeful engagement on the 30th of March distinctly showed that one party or both had, either through ill-will or through unfortunate mishap, failed to fulfil the conditions of the engagement. We considered it to be, and we still consider it to be, the duty of both countries and, above all, I will say for the honour of both countries, to examine how and by whose fault this calamity came about. I will have no foregone conclusion. I will not anticipate that we are in the right. Although I feel perfect confidence in the honour and intelligence of our officers, I will not now assume that they may not have been misled. I will prepare myself for the issue; and I will abide by it, as far as I can, in a spirit of impartiality. But what I say is this—that those who have caused such an engagement to fail ought to become known to their own government, and to the other contracting government. I will not say that we are even now in possession of all the facts of the case. But we are in possession of many; and we are in possession of facts which create in our minds impressions unfavourable to the conduct of some of those who form the other party in these negotiations. However, I will not wilfully deviate from the strictest principles of justice in anticipating anything as to the ultimate issue of that fair inquiry which we are desirous of prosecuting, and endeavouring to prosecute. The cause of that deplorable collision may be uncertain. What is certain is that the attack was a Russian attack. Whose was the provocation is a matter of the utmost consequence. We only know that the attack was a Russian attack. We know that the Afghans suffered in life, in spirit, and in repute. We know that a blow was struck at the credit and the authority of a Sovereign—our ally—our protected ally—who had committed no offence. All I say is, we cannot in that state of things close this book and say: "We will look into it no more." We must do our best to have right done in the matter.

Under these circumstances, I again say, there is a case for preparation, and I hope that the House will agree with me, after what I have said about the necessity we are under of holding Soudanese funds available for service elsewhere. I trust that they will not press upon us a demand for time which can have no other effect than that of propagating here and elsewhere a belief that there is some indecision in the mind of Parliament; whereas I believe that with one heart and one soul, and one purpose only, while reserving absolute liberty to judge

the conduct of the Government, and to visit them with its consequences, they will go forward to meet the demands of justice and the calls of honour, and will, subject only to justice and to honour, labour for the purposes of peace.

ADDRESS TO THE ELECTORS OF MIDLOTHIAN.

GENTLEMEN,

I.—INTRODUCTION : PERSONAL INTENTIONS.

A change, even more extensive, and, as I believe, not less safe, than the changes made at former epochs, has now been accomplished in our representative system. It consequently falls to you to express your judgment on the conduct and the work of the expiring Parliament. And it becomes my duty, notwithstanding serious considerations which would lead to an opposite decision, to submit myself to this judgment, by asking a renewal of the trust which you so generously conferred upon me in 1880. I venture to add that I look with cheerfulness to the result of the appeal.

The mention, however, of that year reminds me of the flight of time. It is obviously not possible for me to repeat, in a new Parliament, anything like the labours of the older one. But I am too closely associated with the public proceedings of the last six sessions to withdraw myself from the acquittal or condemnation which is about to be pronounced.

And the circumstances of the case will, perhaps, excuse me, if I find it necessary now to detain you greater length than is usual in an address soliciting re-election.

II.—PARLIAMENT OF 1880. ITS LEGISLATIVE WORK.

In referring to the legislative history of the Parliament of 1880, I do not adopt the language of apology. Even apart from the great subject which has occupied the two last of its six sessions, it will certainly bear a favourable comparison with former periods, and in particular with the Parliament which preceded it.

That was a Parliament composed of "farmers' friends," but it effected no legislation for the farmer in his time of trial. Inheriting at its birth in 1874 a most flourishing finance, it left untouched the Malt Tax, which (except when Tory Governments were in power) Tory orators had always denounced as an intolerable burden; and it passed a measure ostensibly for giving security to farmers in respect to their improvements, which

the farmers themselves received with indifference or contempt. But the last Parliament repealed the Malt Tax ; substituted for the abortive Act a law giving real security to improvements made by tenants ; and also dealt, I believe effectively, in its very first session with the serious grievance of the occupiers of land from the ravages of ground game.

Apart from the subjects I have mentioned, the Irish Land Act and Arrears Act, the Burials Act, the Bankruptcy and Patents Acts, the valuable, if still incomplete, reform of the Death Duties, the Act for determining the Liability of Employers, the Act for the Localisation of the Army, the Scottish Secretary Act, the important law framed by Sir Henry James for the repression of Corrupt Practices at Elections, both Parliamentary and Municipal, and the commencement effected, with so much difficulty, in the reform of Procedure, form an honourable record of the determination and ability with which, in the teeth of such an amount of obstruction as had never before been exhibited, the House of Commons has laboured in your cause.

III.—ARREARS OF LEGISLATION.

It is too true, indeed, that the public business of this great empire still remains lamentably in arrear. These arrears include more subjects of importance to the several sections of the country than I can now enumerate. As perhaps the most important portions of the unfulfilled work, I may refer to the subjects of London Government, and of Local Government generally (in which I include the Liquor traffic), and of the Land Laws. But I say advisedly that with both these subjects we should have been enabled effectually to grapple, had not the Tory party unhappily deemed it to be a duty to encounter with the most determined opposition our main attempts to improve the Procedure of the House of Commons, and our views in favour of multiplying its working powers by a judicious and extensive system of devolution of business to what are known as Grand or Standing Committees. Had that party been opposed in principle to the efficiency of the House of Commons, it could not have pursued its object better than by the course it actually took.

IV.—POLICY ABROAD. TREATY OF BERLIN.

Having thus far spoken of the Parliament with reference to domestic affairs, I now turn to those which lie beyond the sea. With reference to the several questions which we principally considered in 1879-80, I shall proceed to contrast the position they then held with that which they happily hold at the present time.

At that date, among the many provisions of the Treaty of Berlin which remained unexecuted, there were two which were highly menacing to the general peace. The territory promised to Montenegro, and the territory virtually promised to Greece, had not been given ; and a full and formal title was thus afforded to any one of the contracting States, whose purposes it might suit, to renew at its pleasure the war in the East of Europe. With the countenance and aid of some of the Powers, we were enabled to obtain the fulfilment of the covenant with Montenegro, and to secure Thessaly for Greece. Other important

provisions of the Treaty unhappily still remain a dead letter, but they have not the same immediate connection with the public tranquillity.

V.—AFGHANISTAN, AND GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

We found Afghanistan broken to pieces, held down only by the might of British arms, and so perilously hostile that it required a force exceeding sixty thousand men to maintain security on the North-Western frontier. Under the late Ministry, that country was restored to unity and independence, in defiance of resolute opposition and motions of censure from the Tories. Forty of the sixty thousand men thus became available for the legitimate military purposes of the Indian Government.

Since that time, there has arisen a controversy with Russia, involving the security of the Indian frontier, for which no particular administration or party is responsible. We shall, as I trust, prosecute that controversy, in the interest and with the assistance of the Afghan Ruler and people, to a happy issue. Need I remark how different, and how far more formidable, would have been the obstacles encumbering our path, had we, by a continuance of violence and injustice, driven that brave people into the arms of our opponent?

At the very same time when the military resources of India were thus heavily taxed, and her finances deranged by an expenditure on the Afghan War of 1878 not falling far short of twenty millions, her internal liberties, which we ought carefully and systematically to enlarge, had been invaded by a law, passed with indecent haste, which placed the freedom of her native press at the mercy of the Government. This law has been repealed. The Press is again free, and native powers have been in other respects enlarged by the wise policy of Lord Ripon, than whom, as every expression of Indian opinion proves, no viceroy has more ably or more effectually laboured to cement the union between India and the British Crown.

VI.—SOUTH AFRICA.

Not less unfortunate was the position of affairs in South Africa. We had there effected, in violation of our pledges, and in defiance of the fully declared wishes of the people, a forcible incorporation with the empire of an independent European Republic, whose inhabitants were resolutely determined to be free. We have been severely condemned because, after supplying military means such as to place beyond doubt the superiority of British power, we refused to prosecute a work of sanguinary subjugation. We pursued a policy that has left the Transvaal free, and divested of all hostility; and has averted a war of European and Christian races throughout the South African States, which would have been alike menacing to our power, and scandalous in the face of civilisation and of Christendom. As this has been with our opponents a favourite subject of unmeasured denunciation, so I, for one, hail and reciprocate their challenge; and I hope the nation will give a clear judgment on our refusal to put down liberty by force, and on the measures which have brought about the present tranquillity of South Africa.

VII.—EGYPT.

The policy of a foreign intervention in Egyptian affairs, of which I have not ceased, since 1876, in Parliament and in the Press, to point out the certain dangers, has produced its natural results, which the late Administration strove anxiously and incessantly, yet in vain, to avert.

The chief sources of comfort, in reviewing a series of transactions generally painful, are that we have respected, to the utmost of our power, international laws and arrangements; have confined within Egyptian limits troubles which menaced the general peace; have used every administrative effort to support our gallant forces in maintaining the honour of the British arms; have, beyond all doubt, introduced most valuable improvements, too sorely needed, into Egyptian law and government; and, finally, have indicated provisions on a reasonable basis for the future government of Egypt, and the exercise of its legal autonomy without foreign intervention.

Even preceding topics have been touched but roughly in this address: still more does the complexity of the Egyptian question defy any attempt to unfold it fully within the limits, even the extended limits which I must observe. But in this slight outline I shall use no language which I am not able to sustain.

Postponing for the moment, with a view to greater clearness, what relates to the Soudan, I affirm that every step which we took in Egypt down to the time of the operations against Arabi Pacha, in 1882, was the direct consequence of the agreement with France for reciprocal support, and for the maintenance of a native Government, which had been concluded in 1879 before our accession to office.

The French Chamber, in the exercise of its undoubted right, rejected, in 1882, the proposal of its Ministry to take part in military measures. Sorrowfully, but without doubt, though I felt less than many of my countrymen the pressure of the argument from British interests other than that of honour, I held, and I still hold, that that paramount interest compelled us, in the execution of our pledge for the maintenance of a native Government, to re-establish the authority of the Khedive and the peace of the country, and to prosecute all the practicable reforms.

Our judgment was sustained by public opinion. In November, 1883, we had reached a point at which we were able to advise the evacuation of Cairo, together with the immediate reduction of the occupying force to a brigade in Alexandria and at Port Said. We had thus, in my judgment, a hopeful prospect of an early evacuation of the entire country.

It was then that the disasters of an unhappy war in the Soudan, in no way due to us, produced a state of things so menacing to Egypt itself, that we found it our duty at once to take measures intended to prevent the extension of the disturbances beyond that region. But we insisted upon its evacuation by Egypt, and we offered our aid towards the withdrawal of the garrisons by peaceful means.

Lord Hartington has lately and justly stated, in general terms, that

he is not disposed to deny our having fallen into errors of judgment. I will go one step further, and admit that we committed such errors, and serious errors too, with cost of treasure and of precious lives in the Soudan. For none of these errors were we rebuked by the voice of the Opposition. We were only rebuked, and that incessantly, because we did not commit them with precipitation, and because we did not commit other errors greater still.

Our mistakes in the Soudan I cannot now state in detail. The task belongs to history. Our responsibility for them cannot be questioned. Yet its character ought not to be misapprehended. In such a task, miscarriages were inevitable. They are the proper and certain consequence of undertakings that war against nature, and that lie beyond the scope of human means and of rational and prudent human action; and the first authors of these undertakings are the real makers of the mischief.

However, as between political parties, the matter at length came to a pretty clear issue. At the beginning of the late Session, in one of their innumerable motions of censure, the Opposition condemned us because we would not engage to keep the Queen's forces in the Soudan until we had effected the establishment of some regular Government there. We, who had always deprecated the use of British force for such a purpose, refused the engagement. Further, and since the recent change of Ministry, the new Government has declared in Parliament that, though the process of evacuating the Soudan was too far advanced to be recalled or arrested, yet the measure was in itself to be regretted and condemned. Now, about the vast importance of this question there is no more doubt than about the positions of the two parties in regard to it. I know there are persons of no mean authority who have held that the expedition to Khartoum would have been the most arduous military effort undertaken by us since the battle of Waterloo. We thought the evacuation necessary, wise, and just. The Tories thought it needless and deplorable. Either the country has been saved by the late Government from a most perilous and costly undertaking, to which the present Government had striven to commit it; or it has been deprived by us of a noble opportunity, which they would have used on its behalf. The principles of opposite policies are here pretty clearly brought out; let the country judge between them.

So much for the Soudan. I must revert to Egypt proper.

The present Government have rightly declared by the mouth of Lord Salisbury, since their accession to office, that no progress could be made in our Egyptian relations, until the finance of that country was adjusted. As this long and wearisome process is now complete, and as the yet more formidable barrier of Soudanese operations is also removed, I take upon me, with no intention of cavil or of censure, to express, in terms if possible still stronger and clearer than those I have used in Parliament, an earnest aspiration for our entire withdrawal from Egyptian territory at the earliest moment which honour will permit. The views of the late Government on this subject are sufficiently known to the Powers most interested in it. A mischievous idea has had some support among us, from opinion and from public journals, either that Egypt ought to be annexed or that it should be placed under a British Protectorate; or

that at the least our occupation of it ought to be indefinitely or greatly prolonged. To each and all of these measures I am altogether opposed. It is said that we ought not to quit Egypt without some compensation for our efforts and sacrifices there. On this I have two remarks to make. First, that we have, according to my conviction from the very first (when the question was not within the sphere of party contentions) committed by our intervention in Egypt a grave political error, and that the consequence, which the Providential order commonly allots to such error, is not compensation, but retribution. Secondly, What is the supposed compensation? It is a prolongation of our military occupation in Egypt. Now, this is simply an aggravation of the mischief, for which it is supposed to compensate. The best wisdom, when a policy founded in error has been adopted, is to bring it promptly to a close. I hope that this subject will be present in all its force to the mind of the country at this juncture. Until we shall have been enabled to quit Egypt, we shall, I fear, remain liable in a hundred ways to be thwarted and humiliated through the numerous rights secured there, by international arrangements, to other Powers. Of the exercise of these rights we have no legal title to complain; for they are founded on international law, and we are bound to respect them. But the result is, that we are, from time to time, unable to secure for Egyptian interests what we think their fair claims, and find ourselves to have undertaken a charge which we can but imperfectly fulfil. I could, if it were needful, illustrate what I have said from the history of the past few weeks, nor do I blame the Queen's Ministers if it shall be found that they have only submitted to the necessities of their position. My desire simply is, that that position should be more clearly understood, and that we should not mistake for an advantage what is really an embarrassment.

I do not doubt our power to continue this occupation, for years and years to come, without effectual hindrance, any more than I doubt the power of the possessors of great fortunes to waste them upon worthless purposes.

When we shall have been set free from our irksome and thankless task, we shall be restored to that admirable position in Europe, of perfect independence and salutary influence, which nothing but our own errors can put in jeopardy; an independence given us by the Almighty, and surpassing that of every other State; an influence which I trust will always be held subject to a cordial recognition of international equality, and will be exercised on every legitimate occasion in support of the position of the smaller States, of the infant liberties established in the East, and generally of rational freedom, and of peace and public right.

VIII.—PUBLIC EXPENDITURE.

In addressing you last year, I entered pretty freely into the question of the public expenditure; and to the published statements of that period I would refer you. The subject is closely associated with the matters of which I have just spoken.

Since my visit in 1884, two causes have swelled the amount of public charge up to a point so high, that I shall rejoice if it shall effectually

arrest the attention of the nation. The preparations required in connection with Russia and Afghanistan, here and in India, have probably cost ten millions; on which I shall only say, that the object is honourable and worthy, and that preparation in tens of millions may even be economical, as means of averting wars which would certainly cost hundreds of millions. The second has been the heavy charge of measures growing out of the obligation to attempt, when the season permitted it, the relief of the heroic General Gordon: measures which, as I have shown, would have entailed, besides the heavy past expenditure, further and probably much heavier expenditure in the future, had the policy of our opponents in favour of occupation been adopted, in lieu of our policy of withdrawal from the Soudan.

In 1879-80 I pointed out to you that the policy of the years immediately preceding was likely to entail much charge upon the public. But among all the costly demands we have had to meet (I do not now speak of the Russian controversy), in connection with policy abroad, I do not know of so much as one which has sprung out of any new device of ours. Establishments, as was well said by Lord Beaconsfield when he was Mr. Disraeli, must depend upon policy; and in a just and peaceful policy, foreign, Indian, and colonial, is to be found the surest road to economical administration of the public affairs, and the best security against the panic and excitement which sometimes cause additions to our great services beyond what they really require.

So much I have felt it needful to say on leading topics which affect the commission I received from you in 1880.

IX.—PROCEDURE.

I will now approach the consideration of domestic affairs in a prospective light: and at the threshold I place the question of Parliamentary procedure. It has gratified me to find abundant proof that the country was and is fully alive to the vital importance of Devolution, and generally of Procedure, in the House of Commons. To insist upon these weighty matters implies nothing derogatory to the wisdom of the old rules of Parliament. They were well adapted to the work which Parliament had formerly to do. Nothing is now required, but to bring about, in a like spirit, a similar adaptation. The task of the House of Commons in our time has habitually exceeded what had ever been imposed upon a legislative body in the whole history of the world. Those who are reasonably so keen for legislation on one subject or another should recollect that, with regard to each and all of them, the primary question is as to the sound working condition of the great instrument by which all legislation is accomplished. If that instrument is properly adjusted, I believe the House can do its work: if that operation is defeated or evaded, I am certain it cannot. The constituencies have now to choose a new House: and it depends entirely on their selection among candidates, and on their treatment of candidates with reference to these questions, whether that work shall be done or not.

Meantime, I desire clearly to point out the three cardinal points of the question. First, the congestion of business, now notorious and inveterate, degrades the House of Commons, by placing it at the mercy

of those among its members who seek for notoriety by obstructing business, instead of pursuing the more honourable road to reputation by useful service; or of those who, with more semblance of warrant, seek to cripple the action of the House of Commons, in order to force the acceptance of their own political projects. Secondly, it disappoints, irritates, and injures the country by the suspension of useful legislation. And lastly, and, perhaps, worst of all, it defeats the fundamental rule of our Parliamentary system that the majority shall prevail, and puts it in the power of the minority to prevent, by unduly consuming the time of the House, the passing of measures which it dislikes, but of which it is afraid openly to declare its disapproval. This country will not, in the full sense, be a self-governing country, until the machinery of the House of Commons is amended, and its procedure reformed.

X.—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

I am not sure that the views of the country are so clear, and its mind so fully ripened, on the next great subject which I have to mention, that of Local Government. First, it is involved in great intricacy of financial and administrative detail. We are proverbially apt to become careless and remiss about what we have long securely and familiarly held in possession. And, moreover, the position of the question has been seriously damaged by the profuseness of the Tory party in charging local burdens on the Consolidated Fund, without making due attempts to improve the organisation of local authority, and by centralising measures of which, when in power, they have procured the adoption. I am glad to see that Lord Salisbury has recently spoken in strong terms of the advantages of Local Government; but the opinions of Lord Salisbury have already been in strong contrast, on the great subject of Irish administration, with more influential opinions of his colleagues in the House of Commons. Even the limits of this address do not permit me to set out in detail what I think of the weight and moment of this thoroughly unexciting, but as thoroughly vital, subject. I believe it to lie at the root of all our liberties, and of all our aptitudes. It is the instrument of our public education: and it is the guarantee of our political stability. Even in its imperfect development it has been of inestimable value; and it may and should be made to do yet more for us in the future, even than what it has done for us in the past.

In the reform of Local Government the first objects to be aimed at, in my judgment, are to rectify the balance of taxation as between real and personal property; to put an end to the gross injustice of charging upon labour, through the medium of the Consolidated Fund, local burdens which our laws have always wisely treated as incident to property; to relieve the ratepayer, not at the charge of the working population, but wholly or mainly by making over, for local purposes, carefully chosen items of taxation; to supply local management with inducements to economy, instead of tempting, and almost forcing, it into waste; finally, and most of all, to render the system thoroughly representative and free. The gentry of this country have, especially in the counties, long and with justice been commended for the upright

and intelligent discharge of local duty. I am confident that they will continue to enjoy this honourable distinction none the less when our system shall have been placed throughout under effective popular control.

Other questions as to the modes in which Local Government may prudently be applied, and the extent of its attributions, will doubtless arise for consideration when the primary work shall have been accomplished. But I will not omit to observe that this subject furnishes the medium through which we may most reasonably look for an effectual adjustment of the laws relating to the sale of alcoholic liquors.

XI.—LAND.

The next of the important subjects which I have presumed to name is the reform of the laws relating to land. I shall treat it, as I have treated Local Government, without any attempt to embrace all the topics which may be usefully or legitimately raised in regard to it. I shall only touch on those parts of the question which I hope may be found mature for very early handling by the Liberal party. Belonging to a school which has much faith in economic laws, I disapprove of interference with them by entails, to which I am still more opposed on social and moral grounds. My desire is both to maintain freedom of bequest, and to establish freedom of possession as our future system; and also to deal freely with the transfer of land, the registration of land, the taxation of land during life, and upon death, and the custom of primogeniture as it now exists in cases of intestacy. I shall rejoice if the means thus to be provided, or other means in themselves commendable, shall lead to a close connection between the nation and the soil, through a large extension in the numbers of those directly interested in its possession and its produce, but most of all in the proprietorship of their own dwellings.

The balance of taxation as between movable and immovable property, and still more as between property and labour, should be carefully watched, and should be adjusted, when occasion offers, with a scrupulousness which was unhappily too little observed at the time when property had the absolute command of Parliamentary action. But as to the fundamental principles which make property secure, they will, I believe, be upheld among us, whether in the near or the more distant future, with the same courage and integrity as will our liberties, of which, indeed, they form an essential part.

XII.—REGISTRATION.

I shall only say a very few words upon the fourth of the subjects I have named, that of Registration; for I have still many topics to touch on.

The law has fixed the qualification of voters in the three kingdoms. But the possession of the qualification has to be established in the case of each individual before he can vote. After this has been done, his name is placed upon the authenticated list which we term the Register. The subsidiary conditions under which he thus comes into practical

possession of his title require to be re-considered, and the whole subject demands review, in order that this essential process, the complement of the late Reform Act, may be carried through with certainty, simplicity, and the smallest possible expenditure of personal labour and of money.

XIII.—CONDITION AND STRUCTURE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY.

I have already named four legislative subjects of moment which have reached a state of maturity. Upon each and all of them, with a reasonable freedom as to details, I believe that the Liberal party is generally and firmly united. They are in basis and spirit truly Liberal; yet they ought not to stir Conservative alarms. The work is ready, and the workmen. The Liberal candidates await the commission to proceed, which the constituencies alone can give.

But Tories and Irish Nationalists, who have acted in such unprecedented harmony for some years, are united in reproaching, and even in mocking, the Liberal party on account of its divisions.

Both the Oppositions which overthrew the late Administration have rested more or less on the enforced silence of dissentients among themselves, which greatly eases Parliamentary operations. But Liberalism has ever sought to unite freedom of individual thought and action, to which it so largely owes its healthy atmosphere, with corporate efficiency. This aim is noble, but it is difficult. For my own part, although it is not the method best adapted to the personal convenience of those who may lead, nothing would induce me to exchange it for the high regimental discipline which brings the two minorities, each in a well-fused mass, into the voting lobby. For this valued freedom, and this abundance of variety, cherished in the Liberal party, have not disabled it, during the last half century, from efficient action. For more than two-thirds of that period the Liberal party has held power, and fully nine-tenths of our useful legislation have been due to its inspiration and its labours. What modern Britain at this moment is, she has become substantially through the agency of the Liberal party.

Such being the facts, it seems natural to ask—why may not the Liberal party of the future be useful, with the same freedom, and by the same methods, as in the past? But, to bar an interrogatory doubtless very disagreeable to our opponents, it is now sought to startle and inflame the country by pointing to the views of our most advanced sections. Doubtless there are many Liberals who would decline to countersign all my opinions, nor could I undertake to be responsible for all theirs. But no section constitutes the Liberal party. Each section constitutes an element of the Liberal party; and it is by the mixture and composition of its elements, not by the unchecked dominance of any one among them, that its results have been, and will be, attained. I have found honourable co-operation with Liberals of all sections, especially during the last five arduous years, for great public purposes, such as the extension of the franchise, perfectly attainable in the past, and, were I a younger man, I should hope that it might long continue in the future. With regard to the four great subjects which I have mentioned as going far to supply a scheme of present action for the party, I could not but anticipate such co-operation with confidence.

XIV.—UTTERIOR SUBJECTS OF LEGISLATION OR DISCUSSION.

Thus far I have only mentioned political matters which have been for a sufficient time before the public mind, which have undergone much discussion, and on which it may be reasonably hoped that the Liberal party is ripe for united action. Generally, they may be said to stand among the unrecovered arrears of public business.

But they constitute only the vanguard of the host of subjects with which the coming Parliament, and its successors, will, or may, have to deal. Many of them ought already to have been overtaken and disposed of, had the obstacles to the efficiency of the House of Commons been effectually overcome. But, apart from this unsatisfactory reminiscence, it appears probable, even after all which the last half century has achieved, that the growth of population, the expansion of our relations throughout the world, the rapid development of social interests, and the extension of popular power, will, at least for a considerable time, be amply represented in new legislative wants. From any full attempt to set them forth, the law of nature, at my time of life, dispenses me. But there are some among them as to which the foundations of discussion have already been laid, and which may therefore demand from me a few words: such as the reform or reconstitution of the House of Lords, the abolition of all payment for primary education, and the severance of the Church from the State. I place these subjects together, without intending to imply that I take personally the same view of the whole of them.

XV.—CHANGES IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

As respects changes in the House of Lords, by far the best guarantee for the safe treatment of this important subject is one that can only be supplied by that House itself, in the moderation and wisdom of its future conduct. Since 1832, it has been continuously identified with the Tory party in the State, which has obtained the suffrage of the nation in only two out of twelve Parliaments; and few outside that party will maintain that the legislative action of the House of Lords has on the whole been satisfactory. It is likely that, if its constitution remain unaltered, the ties of its present party connection will progressively be tightened rather than relaxed. I certainly cannot deny that there is a case sufficient to justify important change. Those who hold with Mr. Burke, as I do, that knowledge and virtue alone have an intrinsic right to govern, might desire to constitute a second Chamber strictly on this basis. But we cannot in the nature of things exclude the action of other influences, especially the permanent, growing, and highly aggressive power of wealth. Among these secondary influences, as a link with the past, as a force congenial to the character and habits of the people, and as a check on other and yet more mixed agencies, I hope that, in the reconstitution of the House of Peers, when it arrives, a reasonable share of power may be allowed, under wise conditions, to the principle of birth.

XVI.—ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

When the subject of State religion comes into discussion, although it has been more fully probed and unfolded in Scotland than elsewhere, and although a lively feeling, as was naturally to be expected, exists with regard to it in Wales, yet it is the larger case of England which principally arrests attention.

Bearing in mind all the circumstances of the question, in connection with the length of my own past career, I might perhaps plead for an exemption from all share in this controversy. But, having regard, on the other hand, to the deep interest felt in it, with strong conviction, on the part of so many whose confidence I have enjoyed, I think it right to say a few words, if they only tend to qualify over-sanguine expectations, and to mitigate alarms, which appear to me exaggerated, though they are entertained by many whom, both officially and personally, I revere.

With respect to the severance of the Church of England from the State, I think it obvious that so vast a question cannot become practical until it shall have grown familiar to the public mind by thorough discussion; with the further condition that the proposal, when thoroughly discussed, shall be approved. Neither, I think, can such a change arise, in a country such as ours, except with a large observance of the principles of equity and liberality, as well as with the general consent of the nation. We can hardly, however, be surprised if those who observe that a current, almost throughout the civilised world, slowly sets in this direction, should desire or fear that among ourselves too it may be found to operate. I cannot forecast the dim and distant courses of the future. But, like all others, I have observed the vast and ever increasing development, for the last fifty years, both at home and abroad, in the Church to which I belong, of the powers of voluntary support. Those abridgements of her prerogatives as an Establishment, which have been frequent of late years, have not brought about a decrease, and have at least been contemporaneous with an increase, of her spiritual and social strength. By devotedness of life, and by solidity of labour, the clergy are laying a good foundation for the time to come. The attachment of the laity improves, if I may so speak, both in quantity and in quality. The English Church also appears to be eminently suited, in many and weighty points, to the needs of the coming time. And I have a strong conviction that, if this great modification of our inherited institutions shall hereafter be accomplished, the vitality of the Church of England will be found equal to all the needs of the occasion.

XVII.—GRATUITOUS EDUCATION.

The subject of a gratuitous primary education, to be paid for from sources wholly public, is one on which I desire to reserve a final judgment. There are obvious arguments in favour of the plan, which, because they are obvious, it is unnecessary to repeat. But it appears to me to suggest some difficulties which demand at any rate a grave

scandal and a danger to the Empire, has been fundamentally improved, at the cost of no small effort, by the action of Parliament.

But the wants of Ireland have to be considered, as well as her grievances. Down to this hour Ireland has continued greatly in arrear both of England and of Scotland, with respect to those powers of local self-government which associate the people, in act and feeling, with the law, and which lie at the root, as I believe, of political stability, of the harmony of classes, and of national strength. This is a serious evil; and it is the more to be regretted, because both the circumstances and the geographical position of Ireland may appear to invest her, as a portion of the Empire, with special claims to a liberal interpretation and application of the principles which the people of Great Britain have traditionally held so dear.

Whatever be the obligations of the party now in power to those known in the existing Parliament as Irish Nationalists, the Liberals of England and Scotland will have to draw the inspirations of their future policy from a higher source, and to cast aside the recollections of party action during the last few years, which ought not to prejudice in any way any just claim of the Irish people. Neither should those claims be hindered on account of any premature and prejudicial words which may have been spoken in the acutest, that is the electioneering, stage of a long and too bitter controversy.

Nothing can be easier than to mar and intercept, by narrow prejudices and by appeals to passion, any adjustment of this important question; which cannot be satisfactorily handled unless it be approached, on the one side and on the other, in a spirit of enlightened moderation.

Should such a spirit happily prevail, I cannot believe that the political genius of these nations, illustrious in the history of the world, will prove inadequate to the solution of the problem, without the heavy drawback of embittered civil strife. If such strife should now unhappily arise between Ireland and Great Britain, the one may readily reproach and condemn the other, but the broader opinion of the civilised world will, I conceive, alike censure both.

In my opinion, not now for the first time delivered, the limit is clear within which any desires of Ireland, constitutionally ascertained, may, and beyond which they cannot, receive the assent of Parliament. To maintain the supremacy of the Crown, the unity of the Empire, and all the authority of Parliament necessary for the conservation of that unity, is the first duty of every representative of the people. Subject to this governing principle, every grant to portions of the country of enlarged powers for the management of their own affairs is, in my view, not a source of danger, but a means of averting it, and is in the nature of a new guarantee for increased cohesion, happiness, and strength.

We have no right to expect that the remedial process in human affairs shall always be greatly shorter than the period of mistakes and misgovernment. And if, in the case of Ireland, half a century of efforts at redress, not always consistent or sustained, and following upon long ages for which as a whole we blush, have still left something to be attempted, we ought not to wax weary in well doing, nor rest until every claim which justice may be found to urge shall have been satisfied.

The main question is, whether it is for the interests of all the three countries that the thorough and enduring harmony which has now been long established, but only after centuries of manful strife, between England and Scotland should include Ireland also. My personal answer to the question is this: I believe history and posterity will consign to disgrace the name and memory of every man, be he who he may, and on whichever side of the Channel he may dwell, that, having the power to aid in an equitable settlement between Ireland and Great Britain, shall use that power, not to aid, but to prevent or to retard it. If the duty of working for this end cannot be doubted, then I trust that, on the one hand, Ireland will remember that she, too, is subject to the authority of reason and justice, and cannot always plead the wrongs of other days in bar of submission to them; and that the two sister kingdoms, aware of their overwhelming strength, will dismiss every fear except that of doing wrong, and will make yet another effort to complete a reconciling work, which has already done so much to redeem the past, and which, when completed, will yet more redound to the honour of our legislation and our race.

XIX.—THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

In this lengthened address, which from its very length has enabled me to write with much of individual freedom, I have avoided criticism upon the proceedings of the Government now in office; for the most important part of them, so far as they are known to me, relates to the government of Ireland, and I am desirous to hold that subject altogether separate from retrospective controversy. I also refrain from all comment in detail upon the conduct of the party as an Opposition in the House of Commons: but it was so novel, and so ominous by way of precedent, as to oblige me briefly to observe that, on many matters, and especially on many matters relating to foreign affairs, it supplied an example of everything which a high-minded Opposition should avoid.

I may, however, say that we have given, as was our duty, a cordial support to the new Administration in its endeavours to conclude an arrangement of the Afghan frontier with Russia on the basis which had been laid down by Lord Granville. And I have observed with satisfaction that the Secretary of State for the Colonies appears, so far as we are informed, to exercise a wise caution in South Africa with reference to any further extension of our territorial responsibilities, which I hold it most unwise to enlarge without an overruling necessity.

XX.—CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it may be observed that much of what I have written refers to a future which, according to all expectation, lies beyond my reach. Nevertheless, as it appears to me, the great occasion of choosing a Parliament entails the duty of preparation for contingencies which it may take long to develop; and it is to aid, so far as I may, in the fulfilment of this duty, that I have thus submitted my views to your consideration.

Trusting that the constituencies of the country may, by their devotion

to the public good, prove themselves worthy of the great and noble stewardship committed to them, and confident that you will continue to hold your high place among those constituencies,

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obliged and obedient Servant,

W. E. GLADSTONE.

HAWARDEN CASTLE, *September 17, 1885.*

THE
FOURTH MIDLOTHIAN CAMPAIGN.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR IRELAND.

(ON ARRIVAL AT EDINBURGH, NOV. 9, 1885.).

ALTHOUGH I have travelled a considerable distance to-day, yet in coming among you I feel that I am not far from home. Since you were good enough to bestow upon me your confidence, harmony has prevailed between us, which, I feel convinced, will last until the close of our political connection. I thank you, gentlemen, for the warm and gracious welcome you have accorded to me, and I only wish there were any words I could use that would be suitable to, and sufficient for, the occasion, to acknowledge your kindness in the manner which it deserves. In coming here among you, I must bear in mind that I am coming for purposes of business—and you will not think it a bad compliment, I hope, if I venture to say to you that I am not coming to instruct or to exhort the constituency of Midlothian, for I know, it appears to me that they require but little of instruction or of exhortation. They have had, I believe, a copious allowance of these valuable commodities from my honourable opponent, Mr. Dalrymple. But I am not, gentlemen, about to stimulate you on the subject of the zeal and the care that ought to be exercised in electioneering contests. I recollect too well that you are already consummate masters of the art. I do not think that either in point of purity or in point of efficiency the election of 1880 for the county of Midlothian ever was surpassed in this country—and I have

upon me at this moment the letter of Mr. Richardson, in which, immediately after the close of the poll, he reminds me that the conductors of that election had promised me that I should poll 1,569 votes, and points out that they were not very far wrong, for that I had polled 1,579 votes. I believe that such operations as these cannot be beaten, and if I have to exhort to union and exhort to zeal, but especially exhort to union, I do it, gentlemen, in the belief that words spoken here will pass beyond the walls which enclose us, and possibly may be heard in quarters where there is more occasion or need for them than there is in Midlothian. Neither, gentlemen, will I take this occasion of entering upon the merits of any of the questions that either are to be settled or are not to be settled in the next Parliament. That is a matter which will have my best attention, and I may say that, as in some parts of Scotland, there is a certain amount of doubt, misgiving, and variation of opinion on the subject of what is termed Disestablishment, I propose with no loss of time, on the first occasion that I have the opportunity and the honour of addressing a considerable meeting, which, I believe, will be the day after to-morrow—I propose to say what I have to say upon that subject. At present I will only exhort, and strenuously exhort, to what is called the union of the Liberal party.

THE DUTY OF UNION.

I will only dwell to-day, with any detail, upon one reason for that union. There are many reasons for it. One of those reasons is, that we are, gentlemen, a historical party—we are the representatives of the Liberals of other days. Whether we are worthy to follow them or not, we have yet to prove; but, at any rate, we stand in their place, we profess their principles, we continue their work, and we think their tradition is a high tradition; and whatever it is, a tradition that for the last fifty or sixty years has received the emphatic approval of the people of these kingdoms. They have been years of greater achievements in legislation than had marked any former period in the history of our country, and I do not use the language of vain boasting on behalf of by-gone Liberals, when I state that which is notorious to all—namely, that the great work of beneficial legislation has been mainly and almost wholly in the hands of the Liberal party. Therefore, gentlemen, I say we should not disgrace, we should not come short of the traditions we inherit. I am bound to say that I find another reason for the union of the Liberal party and its close cohesion at this time in the condition of the opposite party. I won't dwell upon that subject now; but there are characters and qualities in portions of that party, which, I own, excite my mistrust in the very highest degree.

But, gentlemen, the main reason, after all, why we should remain united is because we have got work to do, and work upon which we are agreed. I will venture to say that, although sanguine minds may wish to have a wider outlook, and a more complete and comprehensive catalogue of all those subjects in which they feel an interest, yet I, for my part, knowing very well from the experience of a long life, how much is to be deducted in practice for the friction, if I may so call it—

for the friction of public affairs—how much the force of the projectile loses from that friction before it touches the point at which it aims—I know very well, gentlemen, that even upon the moderate estimate of business which I have laid before you, if it should be the happy lot of the coming Parliament to perform that business, and perform it well in its various branches, you will have no reason to have been ashamed of the election in which you are now to take part. But, gentlemen, I come to the point upon which I wish specially to dwell. With regard to that work of which I have ventured to give a description in my address, I would say to those who reproach us with not having a stereotyped uniformity of opinion in the Liberal party—I will answer to them that when we come to the points on which we differ, I hope we shall behave like men of conscience and men of understanding in regard to those points—and if we cannot honourably co-operate, we shall cease to attempt to co-operate at all, that under all circumstances we shall pursue the way of honour, of principle ; but that until we come to the points on which we differ it would be folly, it would be madness, it would expose us to ridicule not less than to censure, if in anticipation of matters that lie now far out of reach, we were to allow these differences to become practical, and to refrain from giving effect to the common opinions we entertain for the benefit of those common purposes which we think the coming Parliament is qualified to deal with.

IRISH PARTIES.

But, gentlemen, I have stated to you that there is one special portion of the work, the probable work of the coming Parliament, which it appears to me desirable to dwell upon in as clear and pointed a manner as I can. Pray bear in mind, gentlemen, that every Parliament has to deal partly with the foreseen and partly with the unforeseen. I have had at former periods of my public life to tax largely the patience of my countrymen in connection with the name of Ireland. On this occasion the name of Ireland has not been so largely before the public as at some former seasons. But there are points connected with it which I wish to state to you, because they appear to me to be of the greatest importance, and to inculcate with the highest amount of force that can be conceived that duty of union to which I have already adverted. Gentlemen, the Irish question is about to assume, as you will readily perceive, a new position, in some respects to receive, happily, a new position, because it is not now a question—as it has been in former times—of cruel grievances under which the people of Ireland have laboured. Thanks to the patience and zeal and energy and good sense of Parliament, those grievances have one by one been removed—but we know very well that our fellow-countrymen in Ireland still feel and believe that they have a want with respect to the management of their own local as opposed to Imperial concerns, which has been a cause of much uneasiness in the relations between the two countries. Now, pray observe that although a great change has taken place in Scotland in consequence of the recent measure of Parliamentary reform, still greater is the actual and the probable change in Ireland. Down to the present time the constituency of

Ireland has been miserably narrow. It has not had the same representation, not even the same comparatively contracted representation—I speak of the counties principally—that has existed in England and in Scotland. I need not go into details, but its constituency has been so limited that you could hardly recognise in its utterance the voice of a nation. It was the voice rather of a class. I do not know whether in consequence of that circumstance, but, undoubtedly, in conjunction with that circumstance, during the whole time while I have sat in Parliament the Irish representation has been so divided that it was almost impossible to say where was to be found the voice of Ireland.

Now, you would have thought that at any rate upon one subject—namely, the disestablishment of the Irish Church—the representatives of Ireland, considering it as mostly a Roman Catholic country, would in very large majority have voted for that disestablishment; but even for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland there was but a bare majority of the Irish members. The Irish members have been divided, for instance, in the last Parliament into three parties, and these three parties have been three minorities—one of them the party terming itself National, led by Mr. Parnell; one of them giving their confidence to the Government; and the third, the Tory members returned from various Irish constituencies. None of these have been entitled by their numerical strength to say, “We speak the voice of the Irish people.” Gentlemen, Ireland has now a constituency as broad, as extended, as qualified to speak their wants and their wishes as either Scotland or England. That is a great change, and, depend upon it, you will never repent the large and generous spirit in which, under circumstances of much difficulty, that perfect equality of treatment has been maintained. Besides that, we are told—I will not undertake to prophesy the result of the Irish or any other election—but we are told, and we are told from every quarter, that the election about to take place in Ireland will result in the return of such a number of the party called Nationalists as to constitute an enormous majority of the whole representatives of that country. Therefore we ought to look forward to that as a high probability, if not a certainty. I think we must look one step further forward; and we must take into our view the likelihood that as the party which is expected to be in a vast majority from Ireland is also the party which has most largely demanded for Ireland the power of controlling her own local and properly Irish affairs—we must take into view the likelihood that that party will make a demand for the concession of large powers to Ireland in that direction.

THE DEMANDS OF IRELAND.

Well now, gentlemen, it is quite plain that if that contingency should arrive it is a grave and serious contingency. Do not let it fill any of us, gentlemen, with alarm. Depend upon it that as long as we act liberally, equitably, and at the same time prudently to Ireland, these countries have nothing to fear from any contingency that can arise in the relations of these islands. But observe the position. We are all, gentlemen, every man, woman, and child among us, convinced that it is the will of Providence that these islands should be bound together in a United Kingdom

—and from one end of Great Britain to the other I trust that there will not be a single representative returned to Parliament who for one moment would listen to any proposition tending to impair, visibly and sensibly to impair, the unity of the Empire. Whatever demands may be made on the part of Ireland, if they are to be entertained they must be made subject to the condition that the unity of the Empire shall be preserved—and that all that authority of the Imperial Parliament which is necessary for maintaining the unity of the Empire shall be steadfastly maintained. I take it for granted, gentlemen, that any demand that is made from Ireland will be a demand which sets out upon this basis, that the unity of the Empire is not to be compromised or put in jeopardy. If it did not set out upon that basis, we should know how to deal with it; but I think it would be unjust to the people of Ireland to suppose that any other basis would for a moment be contemplated. Therefore, gentlemen, I treat it as being in my opinion highly probable that a serious demand will come from Ireland, asking that she be provided more fully than has heretofore been the case with a local means of managing her own properly Irish affairs. She has up to the present time been sadly deficient in the means of local government. Her expectations on that subject are large. She does not consider that her circumstances are in all respects similar to those of Scotland. She may be right or she may be wrong in that respect, but what Ireland may deliberately and constitutionally demand, unless it infringe the principles connected with the honourable maintenance of the unity of the Empire, will be a demand that we are bound at any rate to treat with careful attention. But, gentlemen, I need not instruct you, I need not dwell largely upon any argument to show to you, that in case these expectations should be fulfilled, and in case Ireland should make such a demand, the dealing with that demand will be a matter of the highest responsibility. To stint Ireland in the powers which may be necessary or desirable for the management of matters purely Irish would be a great error, and if she were so stinted, the end that any such measure might contemplate could not be attained. But if, on the other hand, in approaching such a subject the error were made of condescending either to clamour or to fear in such a way as to violate the principles of honourable obligation, and as to impair the unity of this great Empire, then indeed, gentlemen, a fatal error would have been committed.

EVERYTHING FOR IRELAND SAVE SEPARATION.

Now, why do I lay this matter before you? I lay it before you, gentlemen, because it has, in my opinion, a close and an immediate bearing upon the circumstances of the present election. It is not, let me say, for me a great difficulty to contemplate taking part as a Member of Parliament in the manipulation, so to call it, of such a question; because for years and years past, and upon repeated occasions, I think, in Midlothian, certainly in the House of Commons, I have declared that in my opinion it would not only be allowable, but beneficial, when once the wishes of Ireland shall be constitutionally ascertained—not only allowable, but highly beneficial to the three countries and to the Empire at large that everything should be given to

Ireland in the way of local self-government which is consistent with the maintenance of the unity of the Empire—and the authority of Parliament connected with the unity of the Empire. The working out of that principle is, as I have said, a matter of the utmost difficulty.

LIBERAL MEASURES AND TORY MINISTERS.

Well now, gentlemen, I want you to consider with me for a moment what is necessary in order that that principle may be safely worked out. Some may say, why not allow the present Government to work it out? I won't give a positive answer upon that question. I am not at all sure what the effect of the coming election may be upon the existence of the present Government. But then, gentlemen, you must bear in mind that Tory Governments are sometimes able to carry measures of importance when once they have made up their mind to it with a greater facility than Liberal Governments can. Now, take Sir Robert Peel, of whom I always have spoken, among you and everywhere else, with sentiments of the utmost respect—I may say of affectionate respect. The Government of Sir Robert Peel carried, as you know, the repeal of the Corn Laws at a great cost to Sir Robert Peel himself, for it broke up the associations of his life and expelled him from the Conservative party, which then became known as the Protectionist party. Sir Robert Peel was enabled to carry the repeal of the Corn Laws—why? Not because he was able to carry with him a majority of those who had placed him in power—on the contrary, he only carried with him a minority of those who had placed him in power—but because the measure which he proposed received the fair and liberal consideration of the Liberal party which sat opposite to him. I am afraid that if Sir Robert Peel had not been the person to propose the repeal of the Corn Laws—if it had been left to Lord John Russell to discharge that office—that measure would not have had the same fair and liberal consideration from the body of the Tories. In the same manner, Sir Robert Peel was enabled to carry an Act with regard to the College of Maynooth that undoubtedly no Government called Liberal could have carried. And we know on a later occasion, when Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr. Disraeli) had performed that curious and interesting process of what he termed “educating his party”—and when he brought in something called a household suffrage bill, the Liberal party did not reject the bill because it was brought by him, but they made it into a real household suffrage bill—and were most willing to promote the passing of it, although it had been proposed by a Conservative Government. But do you suppose that bill would have been as easily passed by a Liberal Government? You may judge by seeing what had taken place in the very year before 1867, or the year of the Household Suffrage Bill. In 1866, when we proposed—anxious, perhaps too anxious, to conciliate the fears and prejudices of our adversaries—when we proposed a moderate and limited extension of the suffrage, you know very well that the consequence of that Act was an opposition which both defeated the bill and expelled the Government. And therefore, gentlemen, I won't say now whether the present Government can or cannot deal with this question. But quite apart from the names of Whig and Tory this one thing I will say, and

will endeavour to impress, and it is this, that it will be a vital danger to the country if at the time that the demand of Ireland for large powers of self-government is to be dealt with—it will be a vital danger to the Empire if there is not in Parliament, ready to deal with that subject, ready to influence the proceedings upon that subject, a party totally independent of the Irish vote.

POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS.

I will now suppose, gentlemen, for argument's sake, that the Liberal party might be returned to the coming Parliament—this is rather a staggering supposition—in a minority, but in a minority which might become a majority by the aid of the Irish vote. And I will suppose that owing to some cause the present Government had disappeared, and that the Liberal party was called upon to deal with this great constitutional question of the government of Ireland, in a position where it was only a minority dependent upon the Irish vote for converting it into a majority. Now, gentlemen, I tell you seriously and solemnly that although I believe the Liberal party itself to be honourable, patriotic, sound, and trustworthy, yet in such a position as that it would not be trustworthy. In such a position as that it would not be safe for it to enter upon the consideration of the principles of a measure with respect to which at every step of its progress it would be in the power of a party coming from Ireland to say, "Unless you do this, and unless you do that, we turn you out to-morrow." Well now, gentlemen, be so kind as to accompany me one step farther in my reasoning. I put the supposition that the Liberal party—in order to bring out the idea that I have in my mind, I put the supposition that the Liberal party should be returned to the coming Parliament in a minority, but in a minority which might be turned into a majority by the aid of eighty Irish members belonging to what is termed the Nationalist party. Now, just strike out one word from that argument that I made—efface, or as you say, I believe, in Scotland, delete the word Liberal—and put in the Tory party, and come with me to the supposition that the Tory party—the party of the present Government—is returned to the House of Commons in a minority, but in a minority which may be turned into a majority by the aid of these eighty Irish gentlemen. Now, gentlemen, is that an extravagant supposition? It is never safe to presume upon the issue of an election. We know nothing of the future, and we must not count upon it too confidently; but still, as rational beings, we are obliged to estimate probabilities, and we are obliged to shape our course according to a fair and reasonable estimate of those probabilities.

THE CERTAINTY OF A LIBERAL MAJORITY.

Now, I say it is a reasonable estimate of those probabilities to say that the Liberal party will be returned to the House of Commons in a majority. It will certainly be its own fault if it is not. If it is united it cannot fail to be returned to the House of Commons in a majority such as that it can deal independently with the Irish or with any other question. Now, is that estimate disputed? Go to those who are well

acquainted with the working of the Liberal party all over the country. They will differ somewhat in their estimates, but one and all of them will tell you that unless some strange calamity of disunion or otherwise should happen, the Liberal party is certain to be returned in a large majority to the coming Parliament. But you may say these are all interested witnesses. And what do the Tories say? Now, what do the Tories themselves expect with regard to the coming election? Do they tell you that they will be returned in a majority? Have they a hope of it? Do their estimates soar to that point of elevation from which they could enjoy such a charming prospect? No, gentlemen, nothing of the kind. I read a speech of Lord Salisbury's a day or two ago, in which he referred to the coming election and the possible strength or weakness of the Tory party, and he said, and said very fairly, that the Tory Government would be strong enough if a sufficient number of the voters would vote for it. That is quite true, but that does not advance us much towards a conclusive judgment or to a probable judgment upon the question. Now, Lord Salisbury has given us the interior of his mind upon this subject in a very able, elaborate, and plain-speaking article which he wrote in a publication, termed the *National Review*, in the month of October last year, when we were engaged in the great controversy of the Franchise Bill; and Lord Salisbury there estimated, in a number of forms, the possible contingencies that might affect the Conservative party in the new Parliament—one contingency, the most unfavourable; one contingency, the medium and fair; one contingency, the most favourable to the Conservative party—and his most favourable contingency gave the Liberals in Great Britain a majority of thirty-three over the Tories, and he said himself, with great candour, that that estimate was too favourable to the Conservatives, and that probably their real strength would be less than he had supposed in that estimate, but more than he had supposed in another estimate, where, I think, he had them in a minority of 120 odd, or something of that kind. So, gentlemen, you see what his opinion is, and I believe that opinion to be universal. One hears a good deal in these times, in the shape of more or less authentic information. Men do not keep absolutely secret the estimates they form of the probable course of coming elections—and I can assure you, gentlemen, that the very highest and most sanguine calculation that has been made by any of those who are supposed to be qualified to make such calculations on the Tory side, and in favour of the Tories, that has come to my ears, is one which leaves the Tory party in a minority very much such as Lord Salisbury calculated in the article to which I have referred, but a minority capable of being converted into a majority by the aid of the Nationalist vote for Ireland.

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR A STRONG MAJORITY.

What I wish to know is, whether that will be a safe or a satisfactory position for the country? Suppose that took place—suppose we allow ourselves to be frightened, and to be wheedled, and to be misled—the word “bamboozled” is certainly a very familiar word, and I cannot use it without an apology, but still it is an expressive word, and you know what it means; and if we allow ourselves, by any

follies among ourselves, to be so far divided and weakened, and split up in one place and another, that, although we are a majority over the Tory party, yet we are not a majority of the Parliament, I tell you, gentlemen, that not only the Tory party, and not only the Liberal party, but the Empire, will be in danger, because questions of the gravest moment, and the most Imperial weight, and of vast consequences, may come forward, and will in all likelihood come forward, and there will be no party qualified to deal with them in that independence of position which alone can ensure a satisfactory and an honourable issue.

Gentlemen, let me remind you before I close these remarks that this is matter of the highest importance. We have had our little arguments, and controversies, and anticipations, and desires, about one question and another question. These are all very well in their way and at their time, but rely upon it that if such a matter comes forward at the outset of the proceedings of the new Parliament, as I have described—namely, a demand made constitutionally by the vast majority of the representatives of Ireland for the concession of large local powers of self-government, accompanied with an admission that the unity of the Empire is not to be impaired—the magnitude of that subject and its character will sweep into the shade for the moment all those subjects of ordinary legislation on which I, or on which others, have addressed you, and the satisfactory settlement of that subject which goes down to the very roots and foundations of our whole civil and political constitution will become the first duty of the Parliament. A mistake in it, as I have shown you, would be of the most vital consequence. In order to avoid mistake—in order to have, humanly speaking, every rational certitude of an upright treatment and of a satisfactory issue, it is absolutely necessary that there should be in the Parliament a party able to deal with that question, and able to deal with the promoters of that question, in a liberal and in a kindly spirit, but with a perfect independence of them, so as to maintain every dictate of the principle that maintains the unity of the Empire. That is a matter of absolute necessity. That necessity can only be met, as I think I have shown, by the return of a great and a united Liberal majority to Parliament. Observe, gentlemen, I am not now pressing upon you that which is our assertion alone. It is not our assertion alone; it is the admission of the opposite party that they do not look for a majority of the House of Commons, but they look for such a minority as may become a majority by the aid of Mr. Parnell, and instantly I say, if that be so, “You cannot safely be entrusted with the duty of dealing with this great subject.” I do not mean to say that, under the check and watch of a Liberal majority, that might not be possible; but nothing can make that dealing safe except the presence of a majority, which can only be a Liberal majority, and which shall be sufficient to maintain the independence of the House of Commons as a whole in dealing with this great subject, and of bringing, perhaps, to a final close the long controversies that have unhappily subsisted between Great Britain and Ireland. I think you will agree with me that if other reasons were insufficient—I do not think they are insufficient, I think they are ample and abundant—but even if other reasons were insuffi-

cient, the grave and due consideration of the probable demands that may be made upon Parliament for the settlement of the Irish question is a new and a commanding reason why, standing shoulder to shoulder, and uniting heart to heart and mind to mind, we should adhere to the great commission of Liberal policy which we have received now from two generations of statesmen entrusted with the confidence of the country, and should prosecute with every faculty we possess a work—arduous indeed, as the work of governing this great Empire must always be—a work which we never can hope to fulfil in perfection, for that is beyond human power and human hope, but a work which, by fidelity and devotion, we may hope so far at least to accomplish that this generation shall stand worthily in comparison with those that have preceded it, and honourably in the recollection of those who shall follow it, as a generation that has laboured heartily and well to maintain the fame and the happiness of an Empire than which the world has never seen one more great or glorious.

DISESTABLISHMENT.

(AT EDINBURGH, NOV. 11, 1885.)

THE ONLY POSSIBLE PARTY.

I HAVE already had the opportunity of speaking to a certain portion of your own body, and I may state in two or three sentences a summary of what I then laid before them, because the point is one that has not been largely opened, and it is one, I think, of great weight and importance. I endeavoured on Monday to point out that it was highly probable that a very great question might arise at the very opening of the new Parliament, in consequence of the altered political circumstances of Ireland, with reference to the government of that country, that if any such question did arise it would be of the most profound moment, for it would touch the very foundations of political society in this country and of the united Empire, that such a question never could be dealt with in that Parliament to the satisfaction of the country unless there were present in that Parliament some party powerful enough to be independent of what is termed the Irish vote. According to the opinion of all sides, as far as we have been informed of it, of our opponents no less than our own, there cannot be such a party in the coming Parliament unless it be the Liberal party. That consideration is one of much more than ordinary importance, one of the highest imperial importance, for preserving in these operations in which we are concerned the unity of the Liberal party. I did not at once assume, as my excellent friend Mr. Cowan was good enough to foreshadow, the necessary advent of a

Liberal Government to power. That is a question, no doubt, that may in certain circumstances arise. But there has been a case—rather a remarkable case—in which a Tory Government being in a minority conducted a most important political question to a tolerably satisfactory conclusion. That was the case of the household suffrage in 1867. But why was it possible to conduct that bill to a satisfactory conclusion? Because there was in the House that passed it a Liberal majority who did not care to eject the existing Government. What it desired was the settlement of the question, and the question was settled through its agency in a satisfactory manner. I therefore assume nothing at present with regard to this Government or that Government, but for the moment it is enough for me to say no Parliament can deal with this question in a satisfactory manner unless there be in that Parliament a majority such as to deal with it in an impartial manner, independently of its own fate and its own position, and therefore independently of the Irish vote.

“AN UNBOUNDED ASSORTMENT OF THE MOST GRATUITOUS UNTRUTHS.”

Gentlemen, I pass on from that important subject to one which is perhaps of less importance, on which I am really reluctant to detain you even for a moment, but yet I feel it is necessary to say a word upon it, although it is of a personal character. I know not why, but it has become the fashion with a portion of the Tory party—I am sure it must be disapproved by the great body of that party—to circulate in respect to myself, personally and individually, an unbounded assortment of the most gratuitous untruths. This is a mode of warfare in which, so far as I am aware, the Liberal party never has indulged, and I trust never will. It must be only a section of the Tory party that can indulge in these practices; but I am compelled, they are so frequent, and they come back upon me in the shape of voluminous correspondence from day to day from all parts of the country, that I am obliged to ask you to arm yourselves with stout and resolute incredulity, until the people who have made these assertions have produced proofs for what they say. During the former election I recollect contradicting flatly a series of twelve of them in a single letter to the newspapers. There are not quite so many of them this time, but some of them perhaps may amuse you. It is said by some of the Tories that I possess a large quantity of land in Russia. Another of these edifying statements is that I am in the habit of cutting down trees on Sunday. A third is that I offered to Lord Brabourne a place in 1880 of £4,000 a year. A fourth is that last session I requested Liberals to vote for their party, and not according to their conscience. A fifth is that I opposed on the crisis when flogging in the army was abolished, that I opposed its abolition, whereas I spoke and voted in favour of its abolition. A sixth is that I voted against the motion of Mr. Trevelyan for household suffrage in the counties. Well, gentlemen, that you may see I am not exaggerating the matter, perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you that I have in my possession the allegations, not of unseen and unknown Tories on these subjects, but of three Tory candidates, who have made statements to this effect—Mr. Ackers, Mr. Sidebottom. I mention their names, in order that they may undertake, if they can, to clear themselves elsewhere,

And, gentlemen, a Mr. Arthur Duncombe has inserted this extraordinary statement in his address to his constituency; and what is amusing is, that before he proceeds to make it, he says it is a duty to warn his constituents against the gross inaccuracies of Radical politicians. Having done that, he uses these words. He says that his opponents fail to mention in their explanations to the country—first, that Mr. Gladstone opposed the measure introduced by the Conservatives for the purpose of giving household suffrage to the burghs; and, secondly, that he over and over again voted against Mr. Trevelyan's proposal to equalise the county and burgh franchise.

A PARTICULAR LIE EXPOSED.

Now, I say nothing about the household suffrage of 1867. The assertion is a baseless assertion, but it would lead me into lengthened explanation; and I take that which is nearer to us, which is more germane to the present situation, relating to the county suffrage, and you will be astonished, gentlemen, when I tell you that instead of its being true, that over and over again I voted against Mr. Trevelyan's motion—on the contrary, I never voted against it. When Mr. Trevelyan made his motion in six successive years of the Beaconsfield Administration, it is quite true that in the first of those years—which was shortly after I had retired from Parliament, and during a session in which I took little part—I was not in the House during the division; but it is also true that in the five successive years on each of which the proposal was made and rejected by the Government of Lord Beaconsfield, I voted for it upon every one of those occasions, as may be seen by those who consult the division lists. Not only so, but I entered into a literary controversy with my friend Lord Sherbrooke—we were fighting with one another by articles in a very widely spread review—he contending for the limitation of the suffrage, and I contending for its wide extension. Candidates in their addresses to their constituencies, forsooth, desirous of correcting inaccuracies of Radical politicians, set before them statements so worthless, so baseless, so wanton, and so culpable as these. Gentlemen, I do not wish to detain you long upon that; but it is a warning when this practice has, unfortunately, attained so much currency, that I felt it necessary to give—not to you so much a warning as to the country through any report that may be made of these remarks—in order that much trouble may be saved by those whose fears and apprehensions it is sought to excite by these very illegitimate means. I won't suppose now that any of these candidates were conscious of uttering a falsehood, but I say they were guilty of the most culpable neglect and carelessness in laying such trash before their constituents, and that their constituents ought, perhaps, to measure by the culpable neglect and carelessness they have shown on this occasion, their capacity to serve them in Parliament.

A POSTHUMOUS BEQUEST.

I come to a graver subject, and one upon which I address you, not in consequence of what I believe to be an immediate and urgent Parliamentary necessity, but on what I believe to be an occasion of considerable misapprehension in some portions of the country. I said on Monday that

I would to-day state to you what I had to say on the subject of the establishment or disestablishment of the Church. I have alluded to the subject in my address to the electors of the county of Midlothian; and I must fairly tell you that when I wrote what now stands, I think, as the sixteenth section of that address, I considered it to be in the nature of a posthumous bequest. I wrote it with the fullest conviction—a conviction which I still retain—that I should never be called upon to take part in a practical controversy on the subject of Disestablishment. That address related to England, and what I am now saying relates particularly to England. The circumstances of England and Scotland at the present moment are not precisely the same. I will deal with both, but I am now speaking particularly with reference to England. And I wrote simply for the purpose—perhaps it was a vain and idle hope—of recommending that when, in a future more or less remote, that controversy shall arise in England, it should be prosecuted in an equitable temper, with kindly feelings, with careful endeavours to master its enormous difficulties, and with some mitigation of those perhaps over-sanguine hopes and certainly too much excited fears with which persons are apt, I think, to approach the question at the present day. After I had written that passage I heard no more of the question for many weeks. It certainly excited no alarm, and for a long time I heard nothing of any endeavour to make the question of Establishment or Disestablishment what is termed a test question, and certainly all I have to say to-day, gentlemen, will not be in consideration of the merits of Establishment or Disestablishment, but to the business of making it a test question. That is the point upon which I think it is necessary for you to reflect, and consider what is your duty.

A TEST QUESTION.

But it has now come—observe I am speaking of England—it has now come to be made in England to some extent a test question: and how has it come to be made a test question in England? Because, as I affirm, entirely by Tory agencies. Not finding themselves abundantly supplied with legitimate weapons for the conduct of this election, they not unnaturally cast about to see what new artillery they could bring into the field. They know very well that the Establishment question when raised in England must be a most grave and heavy question, and therefore they have endeavoured to persuade the country that it is a question which has got now to be decided. Lord Salisbury, I think, took the earliest opportunity of expressing his conviction that I should propose the disestablishment of the Church of England, and in the Victoria Hall, some ten days or a fortnight ago, he used these words—“We are sure that the critical time has come”—he is sure that the critical time has come. He added that “In the presence of such an issue we cannot think of mere party interests.” I must say, considering the disinterested colour of Lord Salisbury’s remarks, considering what generosity and what chivalry there is in throwing overboard the consideration of party interests in the presence of the question of English Disestablishment, it is particularly fortunate for him that nothing could possibly be so convenient as the introduction of

English Disestablishment for those party interests which he esteems so lightly. And I am bound to say that he has met with some limited degree of success. He has induced a certain number of Liberal politicians to force forward this question. Now, what do I mean by forcing it forward? I do not complain for a moment, in England or Scotland or anywhere else, if electors in the country endeavour to ascertain the views of the candidates, and endeavour to promote, as far as they can, conformity on the part of the candidates to their own opinions. That is a perfectly legitimate proceeding, and in that sense, no doubt, the question of Disestablishment has been discussed both in England and Scotland. The Liberation Society always continues its work, so do societies for Church Defence and Church Offence, and both of them are busy in a certain sense. Of that I make no complaint, it is a perfectly fair thing. But what I do question is this, the wisdom or the propriety of placing the Church question in the position of a test question—that is, in a position in which it shall absorb every other question. For, gentlemen, consider what it is to make what you call a test question. It is to make a question that shall absorb and shall extinguish every other question. If you are determined to say, “I will vote for a man—in England—vote for a man who promises to maintain the establishment of the Church, and I will vote against a man who does not promise it,” that makes it a very short affair to deal with the contingencies of the election. For if you determine what will make you vote against him, what is the use of considering any other question at all? There is no sense in it. Your mind is made up.

“A GROSS ERROR AN EGREGIOUS FOLLY.”

Well, gentlemen, what I certainly contend, and very strongly and decidedly contend, is that there is no state of things now existing which makes it either necessary or just or allowable to raise the question of Church Establishment or Church Disestablishment into a position such as this. The question came before me first of all with respect to England because, as you know, the desire of those who stand in my position in Parliament has been to leave the question of Disestablishment in Scotland to be dealt with on its own ground by the Scottish people, as their own affair. But in England I have found that there are a certain number of gentlemen who have allowed themselves to be sympathetically affected by those very disinterested alarms of the Tory party. I mean to say Liberals who are strongly attached to the Church, not only strongly attached to the Church, but strongly attached to the political establishment of the Church, and who therefore seem inclined to say that they will vote for nobody unless he gives a pledge to maintain the establishment of the Church. I will say by and by as to what is the reasonableness of a course of that kind—the possible reasonableness of a course of that kind—when the proper time arrives. The proper time, gentlemen, has, in my opinion, not arrived. It is really a gross error, an egregious folly, on the part of the Liberal politicians to allow themselves to be drawn off from the great, the clear, and the solid issues that are before us, from the important work that we have to perform with regard to questions on which we are all agreed, and to decide the elec-

tion and choose men who are to do the work of Parliament upon issues that are not before us—with reference to work upon which we are not agreed, and with reference to work of which we are morally certain that it is impossible it shall be disposed of at the present moment. Therefore, while those who make the Church Disestablishment in England a test question, and say every Liberal voter should vote for or against a Liberal candidate according as, in his private opinion, he is for or against Disestablishment, we, on the other hand, contend that he ought to say he will vote for or against a candidate on the grounds connected with those great subjects which are ripe for discussion, which can be dealt with, on which we can make practical progress, on which we can render great service to the country, and not upon those questions with respect to which it is impossible either to produce perfect unity amongst ourselves, or to look forward to a practical handling of them during the coming Parliament.

AN ELECTORAL CATECHISM.

Just think how irrational the position in such a Liberal voter adopting that principle must be. A candidate appears before him. I will suppose him a man of high character, and a man of perfect capacity and qualification in all respects for the duties of a member of Parliament, loyal to the Liberal party and the Liberal cause, and thoroughly of opinion that the work of the next Parliament lies in subjects which we have generally and by common consent accepted as the proper work of that Parliament. I will suppose that he is subjected to a question by a Liberal voter who is going to make the Establishment of the Church of England a test question, and he says to him, "Will you vote for the Establishment of the Church of England?" Well, he may be a person who is favourable to Disestablishment, and am I to be told that the Liberal party are intending to exclude from the House of Commons every man who is not favourable to Disestablishment? Is that to be the principle of excommunication on which the Liberal party is to be constructed? Gentlemen, you know perfectly well it is impossible, and it is ridiculous. Suppose any Liberal candidate presents himself to a Liberal voter, and is interrogated by him. He is not a fervent adherent of Disestablishment. But he feels the greatness of the question, feels that it requires the most deliberate consideration, and he has not fully made up his mind, and the Liberal voter says to him, "Will you vote for the maintenance of the Establishment of the English Church?" He answers, "I cannot give that pledge. My mind is not made up on that question. I must consider the question at large with all care. I will give it the best attention I can apply to it, and arrive at a conscientious conclusion, but I do not believe the question as at present before me is a practical question in any shape. I want to know what you think of the great subjects that are before us; what you think of the great question of the relation of the people to the land, a question which has arisen altogether in a new sense since the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer. What do you think of the subject of local government, which is connected with that other question? What do you think of the Imperial relations between England and Ireland? What do you think of the

procedure in the House of Commons? Do you intend that the House of Commons shall remain in that state of incapacity and paralysis to which it has of late in a great degree been reduced! But the Liberal voter says, "Really I cannot give any attention at all to any of those subjects. These are matters which I deem to be as dust in the balance. It is quite true what you tell me of the questions with which, by common consent, the new Parliament will deal, and which will give the new Parliament plenty to do. But I will pay no attention to any of those questions; unless you have made up your mind to support the Established Church of England I will vote against you." Now, gentlemen, that is not a rational course. I assume nothing as to the question whether that might be the conscientious duty of certain persons with certain convictions when the time had arrived; but I say that, in the present state of things, when that work has not to be done, and when other work has to be done, every sensible man should direct his attention to what is going to be set about, and not to that which he knows it is impossible for him to set about during the Parliament that is about to meet.

PERFECT STAGNATION.

In what I have said I think a good deal turns upon—opinion I will not call it—the conviction which I entertain, and which I believe at least ninety-nine men in every hundred in England entertain, that the Disestablishment of the Church of England is utterly remote from the prospects, and the work, and the possibilities of the Parliament which we are about to see elected. But, then, Lord Salisbury turns back to the record of history, and he says, "That is very well, your opinion that Disestablishment is remote; but you remember that you said the same thing in 1865 about the Church of Ireland. You said then, even when there was an election coming on—you said that the question of the Church of Ireland, in your judgment, was not within the range of practical politics—that was in the Parliament about to be elected—and yet in four years after that the Church of Ireland was destroyed. Therefore, your conviction in 1885 is worth no more than the opinion which you expressed in 1865, and, consequently, it is put out of court altogether." I admit that this is a very ingenious point, very ingeniously taken. It is the best point, in my opinion, which has been made by the Tory party. I think it is the best point, because the rest of their points are so very, very bad. However, what is the fact? It is this. I will explain it to you. You know that in Shakespeare we find that there was a river in Macedon, and there was also a river at Monmouth, and so I gave an opinion in 1865, and so I give an opinion in 1885; and as each of these was a river, so each of them was an opinion. Every circumstance on which they depended was not likely to deal, nor did it deal, with the Irish Church? Why did I believe that? Why, gentlemen, in order to appreciate the state of things that then existed, you who live in the present day, and many who may be young, must make a great mental effort. It was a totally different political atmosphere. It was a spirit of apathy that then

prevailed. There was perfect stagnation of the reforming spirit in England. If you observe, during those years, the latter years of Lord Palmerston's life in particular, and it is possible that Lord Palmerston's own great age may have contributed to promote or favour that state of things, but, undoubtedly, it was a state of political apathy and stagnation, and we felt the consequences of that state when in 1866 we proposed a bill for a very moderate enlargement of the franchise, and we met with such opposition, Tory opposition, and even Liberal opposition, that our bill came to grief, and the Liberal Government was expelled from office. It was hopeless, in such a state of things, to raise any great question unless you had a Government formed on the principle of sacrificing itself for the sake of that question. And I did not think, in fact, that the people cared enough about the Irish Church so to treat it. The Irish Church question had been alive for thirty years. It had even lost ground in public estimation. There was an apathy affecting all great public subjects, and there was a great indisposition to have them raised. I know very well what that was, because I know the difficulties under which, during the years from 1860 onwards, I endeavoured to induce the Parliament of that day to accede to financial reform, and in how many cases it was impossible to procure the adoption of even very moderate, very safe, and very obvious propositions.

A GIGANTIC OPERATION.

What was wanted, gentlemen, in the case of the Irish Church, was an attentive state of the public mind interested in public issues. Nothing else was wanted. The moment attention was turned to the case of the Irish Church—and so I said at the time, and so I said in Parliament, in the plainest words—it was impossible to defend it; it was mockery of a Church Establishment. It was in no sense the Church of the nation, and never had been. It was impossible to make a decent or a plausible vindication for it. It was quite certain to me that when that attention came the Irish Church must fall, but at the same time I owned I was not sanguine as to the return of that active state of interest on the part of the nation in political subjects, and that desire for political improvement which alone could enable a Government or a Parliament with a hopeful prospect to take up a great question of that kind. But now, gentlemen, at the present moment everything is exactly different. Instead of its being a case—I refer to the English Church—in which there is nothing to be said, it is a case in which there is a great deal to be said. Instead of being a mockery of a national Church, it is a Church with respect to which its defenders say that it has the adhesion and support of a very large majority of the people, and I confess I am very doubtful whether that allegation can be refuted. It is a Church which works very hard; it is a Church that labours to do its business, a Church that has infinite ramifications through the whole structure and fabric of society, a Church that has laid deep hold upon many hearts as well as upon many minds. The disestablishment of the Church of England, gentlemen, would be a gigantic operation. Tory prophecies might lead you to believe that that would not be so, but Tory predictions always break down. After the disestablishment of the Irish

Church the constant allegation of the Tories was that we should disestablish the English Church also immediately afterwards. I remember being challenged on that subject, and my answer was—Don't believe their allegation. I can tell you that the disestablishment of the Irish Church is what I should call a big job, and as to the disestablishment of the English Church, gentlemen, I did not know then, and I must tell you I do not know now, whether the man yet breathes the air of Parliament that will carry into effect that operation. There is no use in concealing the truth. It would be a breach of duty to conceal it. Many of those who write on Disestablishment in England, I think, know but little of the subject they are writing about. They frame plans of Disestablishment; plans utterly impossible to be entertained, either at the present time, or in any other time. In the work called "*The Radical Programme*" there is a plan of Disestablishment which, even if the people of England had made up their minds on Disestablishment I am quite satisfied never would be accepted or adopted, but they have not made up their minds. The question, instead of being familiar, is strange to the mass of the minds of the people of England. They have not accepted the conviction that the Church ought to be disestablished. When they have accepted it, it will be a very great and a very serious question to consider and examine, and I don't much envy the man who has the examination of it. Therefore, in every point the case of the Church of England is as strongly contrasted as possible with that of the Church of Ireland. In the case of the Church of Ireland what was wanting was an active, and, if I may say so, a sympathetic state of the public mind disposed to deal with great, important questions. That was wanting, and nothing else was wanting. What we now have is a most active and sympathetic state of the public mind. The public mind never was more alive to its public duty than it is at this moment, never more set on the attainment of every practical—and, perhaps I may say parenthetically, on some impracticable reforms—but certainly never more set on the attainment of every practicable reform than it is now. Now, the attention that we wanted, and had not, in the case of the Church of Ireland, is being given to this subject. The result is, we find the mind of England has not been prepared for that great—I may say even tremendous—change, at any rate enormous change; that the people of England have not adopted a conviction favourable to disestablishment of that Church; and until they have adopted it, it would be perfectly futile, either on the part of Liberal Churchmen to entertain apprehensions for the safety of the Church, or on the part of the Tories to insinuate these apprehensions into the Liberal mind with the view of entrapping a few Liberal votes.

THE QUESTION IN SCOTLAND.

Gentlemen, you have exhibited very great patience in allowing me to speak on the subject of the disestablishment of the Church in England, and now we will come a little nearer home. But, in truth, my discourse on the Church of England has not been so entirely irrelevant to your case as, perhaps at first sight it may seem—because the great and governing consideration of the test question appears to me to apply both

to the south and the north of the Tweed. I of course do not presume to say that I have a right to impress that upon the minds of all, but I will point out to you, with the full expectation of your assent, that to maintain that principle at all events is my obvious and palpable duty, I have been endeavouring to lay before you, in clear and strong terms, that as the little worthy leader of the Liberal party I have in England used every effort to prevent the making of the Church question into a test question at this election; partly, and mainly I hope, because I think it utterly unreasonable, but also, I admit, because I think it would be detrimental in the highest degree to the interests of the Liberal party, and to the interests of the country as connected with the interests of the Liberal party. Well, gentlemen, if I have been doing so—and it did not appear to me, as far as I can gather your impression that you thought I had been wrong in that course south of the Border—you will see that it is not possible for me simply to cross the Border, and in crossing the Border, to turn all my declarations inside out and say, although the Church question is not fit to be made a test question in England, it ought to be made a test question in Scotland. I tell you, gentlemen, what would be the first consequence if I were capable of taking such a course. The first consequence of that inconsistent language, and of urging that this subject should be made a test subject in Scotland—the first consequence would be that all the good advice I had given to England would be thrown to the winds, and that the most of the friends of the Church of England would in one great phalanx rush to the poll to support the interests of the Church of Scotland, and throw their weight into the scale adverse to the disestablishment of that Church. Our language has been that the settlement of that subject in Scotland ought to be left to the people of Scotland. But if it were attempted to be dealt with on the principle of making it a test, in comparison with which every other question was to be cast into the shade, and to be treated, in fact, as practically non-existent—if we were to deal with it in that way, it would be quite idle to say that we were leaving it to the people of Scotland. We should at once find that we were dealing with men not sufficiently credulous to be put off in that way, and they would say, “If you choose to leave it to the genuine sense of the people of Scotland, do so, and the sense of the people of Scotland will find plenty of means of making itself known, but if you are using it as a test question, if you are allowing the electioneering screw to be applied to every candidate, and his own personal interest to be put into the scale against the question of the Church, that is not leaving it to the genuine sense of the people of Scotland—that is bringing political motives to bear from other quarters, and bringing personal interests to bear in such a way on the decision of a great public question that you cannot possibly in that manner arrive at an impartial, and dispassionate, and satisfactory view of the question.”

“NEVER MIND DISESTABLISHMENT.”

A little incident passed on my journey north on Monday, which I think it is worth while to mention to you. I do not know how you will judge of its value, but I was struck with it, because it was cer-

tainly not pre-arranged, and it was quite genuine so far as it went. Considerable numbers of people met me at different stations on the road, and at one station I was receiving the kind compliments and cheers of this body of people who were assembled together, when one of them called out—which was evidently unpremeditated—in the middle of the cheering, “Never mind Disestablishment.” I do not know that he meant to signify that he was opposed to it, or that he was in favour of it. I understood him to signify that that is not the business that you have on hand. Thereupon a gentleman, who was—I must say I did not know him personally, but his appearance bespoke his earnestness and his title to respect, and being evidently a gentleman strongly convinced in favour of Disestablishment, he said, “Three cheers for Disestablishment.” As this hall is silent now, so the party remained silent. Another man behind him—I admit that there was not much of an interval allowed—another man behind him called out, “Three cheers for the Liberal cause.” The whole assembly, with rapturous acclamations, testified their assent to the sentiment which had thus spontaneously and thus suddenly been placed before them.

THE LIBERAL PROGRAMME.

What I really think, gentlemen, you will feel is this. It is a very serious responsibility to take political questions out of their proper time and their proper order. I have endeavoured to lay before you—and I must say I think, upon the whole, we have had a most remarkable unanimity, a most remarkable concordance of Liberal opinion as to the questions with which it is our first duty to deal—they are very large questions, very complicated questions. Depend upon it, if those subjects of local government, the thorough reform of the land laws, the procedure of Parliament, the completion of the Reform Bill by all the necessary provisions which we call registration of various kinds, and the settlement of Imperial relations with Ireland on a satisfactory footing—if the coming Parliament is able at its close to record the accomplishment of those great purposes, it will be a Parliament worthy to rank with any of the best, and the most loyal, and the most efficient of those that have marked the history of this country. I cannot but think it an error to attempt to thrust aside these questions—to cast them into the shade and into the darkness, to make them as though they existed not for the sake of a subject, of which I will not undervalue the importance, but of which I utterly deny its maturity at the present moment.

DR. CAMERON'S RESOLUTION.

But, then, gentlemen, I have received to-day a notice that I am to be asked a question which I will anticipate. The question is an intimation that a resolution is to be moved in the House of Commons in favour of the disestablishment of the Scottish Church, and the question is, whether I will support such a resolution or not. It is—“Will Mr. Gladstone vote against Dr. Cameron's resolution? Will Mr. Gladstone, or the leaders of the Liberal party, take the vote on Dr. Cameron's resolution as indicative of the general drift of Scottish opinion on the subject of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Scotland?” I

think I cannot do better, gentlemen, than anticipate these two questions. They are most legitimate inquiries, and they evidently enter into the consideration of the case that we have before us—namely, the case whether Church Establishment is to be made a test question at this election or not, or whether, on the other hand, we ought to labour for a state of things in which every Liberal Churchman, being a voter, shall feel that in voting for a Liberal candidate he is in no way voting for, or giving an opinion on, the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland, though that Liberal candidate may himself be favourable to Disestablishment. That is a state of things I cannot help thinking it is for the interest of all parties to bring about, for I am quite sure—I have said it in private, I believe I have said it in public, at any rate, I say it now—that with regard to the separation of the Scottish Church question from the English Church question, it is in the first place dictated by justice and by right, it would not be right that the question should be decided by English opinion; it is also dictated by policy, because I think no settlement could be satisfactory to Scotland unless it were a settlement the genuine offspring of Scottish sentiment and Scottish conviction. Now, if I am rightly informed, that portion of the Scottish constituencies who are inclined to make Disestablishment a test question at this election are not understanding, so far as I have been able to learn are not of opinion, that they can look to effective Disestablishment in the coming Parliament, and they don't expect legislation for the purpose of Disestablishment.

But there is what is called Dr. Cameron's resolution, and I am asked whether I am going to vote for it. Well, gentlemen, I must refer you to a declaration that I made in 1880. It was on a different subject, but the principle upon which it rested was exactly the same. I was then pressed to give a pledge to vote for an abstract resolution on the subject of the liquor laws, and I stated by your kind permission the strong objections that I see, and that I have always seen, to these abstract resolutions—and I came to my conclusion in these words—I think it was on the 15th of March, 1880—"Therefore, until I am prepared with a plan, and until I see public opinion reaching such a point that I could make myself responsible for the proposed plan, and support of that plan, I decline to raise false expectations by committing myself to an abstract resolution." I did not, gentlemen, at that time presume to blame, and I do not now presume to blame, those who support and bring forward these abstract resolutions; but I must look at my own duty in the light of my own position, and I know if I were to vote for a resolution of that kind I should virtually be making a most solemn and important promise to the country, and that promise, gentlemen, I never have made and never will make until I am prepared to carry it out.

ABSTRACT RESOLUTIONS.

Now, I give you an instance by which you will see that these abstract resolutions are not always worth much. In 1858 there was a Tory Government in power, and a resolution was proposed for the repeal of the paper-duty. It was proposed in terms moderate but intelligible. They knew that the paper-duty could not be repealed that year, and

therefore they thought they would have an abstract resolution, and the resolution stated that it ought not to be maintained as a permanent portion of the revenues of the country. Well, gentlemen, that resolution was passed unanimously with a Tory Government in power in the year 1858. In the year 1860 I was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I produced a Budget of very considerable comprehensiveness, and in this Budget was the repeal of the paper-duty; and, notwithstanding the unanimous resolution, the repeal was met with the most determined and obstinate resistance on the part of the whole Tory party. The bill was finally thrown out in the House of Lords, and became the subject of a constitutional crisis. It was passed with the utmost difficulty—but still it was passed—in the following year, but two years of determined opposition was given to my bill by the very men who gave me unanimous support to the resolution two years before. Of how little effect these resolutions are to bind those who don't want to be bound! They say there is a change of circumstances; but in this world there is always a change of circumstances. You might as well expect one wave of the sea to be precisely the same as the next wave of the sea as to expect that there would be no change of circumstances; and that change of circumstances forms the apology of those who wish to pursue an altered course.

SCOTCH OPINION.

I think the second question put to me is whether I should accept that resolution as conclusively conveying the opinion of the people of Scotland. In my opinion, gentlemen, we are not now speaking of the next Parliament. It is agreed we are speaking now, not of the next Parliament, but of the Parliament after it. Would that resolution be a binding resolution, accepted as conclusive with regard to the possible opinion of the people of Scotland on the question by the Parliament after the next? I tell you fairly it would not; no such resolution could be accepted as conclusive of the opinion of Scotland. It would require a long series of such resolutions, probably, for a considerable time to give that solidity to a declaration of that sort that would justify Parliament in so regarding it. Let us suppose, to take the supposition either way, that in this election the Church question is made a test question, and that Dr. Cameron's resolution was carried by a majority of Scottish members. Well, people would very naturally say this. They would say an election carried upon this question as a test question is not a fair indication of the opinion of the people of Scotland on the subject, because the candidate who has voted for it has done so in consequence of the pressure brought to bear upon him at the election, and in consequence of his finding that, from the particular position of parties in his constituency, it would be more in his interest to go in that direction than in the other direction. That is a very unsafe ground to stand upon, and Parliament would be very slow to recognise it. But let us suppose, on the other side, that it is not made a test question. Well, then, if our view were to prevail, and if I am right in saying that every Liberal voter ought to support a competent and qualified Liberal candidate at this election, whatever be his opinion on the Church question, then, of course, it follows that no such resolu-

tion could be accepted as conclusive, because, as I have said, men were elected on general grounds of Liberalism, and were not elected on the Church question.

“A LONG VISTA.”

I have detained you for a long time, and I will but say a very few more words. I think I have answered explicitly the question proposed to be put to me; and I will say but a very few more words. I hope that in anything that has fallen from me, I have not appeared to undervalue the great question of religious establishment, and the sacredness and solemnity of the convictions that are associated with it. If I have, I have most grievously belied my own internal sentiments. It is a great, it is a gigantic question; and I am very far from saying that if I were a man twenty years younger—if I could stand before you at a future election—if at a future election circumstances were ripe for taking a matter of this kind in hand on the one side or the other, I am far from saying that I should then urge you not to give it a first place in your thoughts and actions. I am now labouring with all my heart for the unity of the Liberal party, and labouring for it not on grounds of policy and of advantage alone, but on grounds of reason. I say it is reasonable that we should continue to be united, because there is work to be done. We know what that work is, and we know that on it we are agreed. But had we advanced further in the future stages, in the coming stages of our political history; were the question of Disestablishment at the door, instead of being, as it now is, at the end of a long vista—I am not speaking of Scottish Disestablishment alone; I am speaking in a great degree of the Church of England. It may be that the Church of England occupies too large a place in my view, but I have England mainly, no doubt, in my view. But at the same time, when Scottish public opinion seems to recognise absolutely that there cannot be any legislation on the Scottish Establishment in the coming Parliament, I do not think I am far wrong in saying what I did. I call, gentlemen, a long vista in politics that which extends beyond the Parliament that is about to come together. But I say at any rate that were the question of Disestablishment at the door, far be it from me to say that it might not become, and probably would not become on both sides for a large portion, perhaps for the mass of the people in Scotland and in England, the one cardinal and determining question.

UNITY, UNITY, UNITY.

But there are very large questions now in view. I may speak of them, perhaps, a little more on other occasions. As I have said, I am labouring for the unity of the Liberal party now; I am labouring for its unity because I believe it will be an honourable unity founded upon common convictions and common purpose in the work now to be done. Far be it from me to say that the unity of any political party is an object that at all times is to be preferred to every other. If we come to a point at which our convictions go radically apart, and if the matters at issue are of vital importance, then I, who am now teaching and preaching unity

to the best of my ability, should hope that the Liberal party will sever and split rather than sacrifice conscience and conviction. There are questions which don't admit of compromise. We all feel that within ourselves. Party is an instrument for the attainment of great ends, rather than a good in itself; but it is a valuable instrument—ah! it is an invaluable instrument—for it has been by party, by party combination and connection, though some sciolists and philosophers may laugh at it—it has been by party combination and connection that almost all the good that has been achieved in Parliament has been attained for the benefit of this country. Convictions are higher than party; and when these convictions come, then is the time to give them effect. Then is the time, painful as it would be, to quarrel among ourselves, but don't let us quarrel till the time comes. Don't let us expose ourselves, in the first place, to the charge of violation of duty, in the second place, almost of ridicule, by allowing our action to be governed at this crisis not by subjects that are before us, but by the subjects which in the main are not before us. This question is raised in England as a phantom light to lure us away from the path that we ought to tread; but don't let my phantom light bewilder us and lead us into error. Don't let any mere vision or excited feeling, however deeply coloured it may be by the ingenuity of politicians, draw us from the straight line of duty. We have got work to do. We do it; we are agreed about it. Nothing can release us from the obligation to prosecute that work to its accomplishment. On our prosecuting it, on our failure in it, or our accomplishing it as it lies, will depend the ultimate judgment of the country—its determination either that we have done or that we have betrayed our public duty.

THE TWO PARTIES.

(AT WEST CALDER, NOVEMBER 17, 1886.)

THE pithy address which has been placed in my hands reminds me of an incident that occurred when I had the honour of visiting West Calder on a former occasion. I did at that time, gentlemen, in a communication with a portion of your number enter upon the subject of the extension of the franchise, and I told you with what earnestness of purpose, reserving of course the choice of time and opportunity, I should labour to promote that object. Now, before I say a word or two upon that subject, I wish to do justice to an individual, perhaps not personally known to you—but that does not matter—with respect to whom I had received information that appears to be erroneous. I made a complaint

last week that three Tory candidates had stated that I had for a length of time opposed the extension of household suffrage to the counties. I knew that that was totally untrue, and I named three gentlemen. One of those, whom I named upon the authority of a gentleman who declared to me that he had heard the words, has written to me to assure me that he never made use of them—that is Mr. Ackers. I am very glad indeed to accept his assurance. I cannot account for the ascription to him of a declaration of that kind by a person who professed he had heard it, but I accept Mr. Ackers's assurance, and regret that I should have been led into error. I am sorry to say that that does not dispose of the case with regard to the others. Since then I have heard of another whom I might put into the place of Mr. Ackers. Gentlemen, allow me to assure you, without entering into details, that to the best of my belief and conviction I have never questioned the propriety of extending household suffrage to the counties. It has been a declaration made by me times almost without number. Many times over in the House of Commons and on every suitable occasion I have given my vote in support of that declaration. Undoubtedly it is a great extension of the franchise which has taken place, and I trust it will prove that in proportion as the extension has been large and the basis of the constitution—the Parliamentary constitution—of the country has been widened, so in that same proportion have the throne and the institutions of the country been strengthened. I look forward with the utmost confidence to the future, in which I believe that Scotland will retain the honourable reputation she has earned since the first Reform Act. Since that Act Scotland has never wavered for a moment in her allegiance to Liberal principles. In every one of the twelve Parliaments which have sat since 1832, Scotland has returned a majority of Liberal members. But while the Liberalism of Scotland has been remarkable for its unvarying tenacity and the solidity of its fibre, that Liberalism has never been distinguished by violence or by a disposition to carry opinions to extremes. It has been as temperate as it was firm, and I trust that moderation, self-denial, and a just recollection of the difficulties which attend the conduct of public affairs will mark the conduct of the new electors in the exercise of the franchise just as much as it did the conduct of the old ones.

INCREASE OF SCOTCH REPRESENTATION.

There is another point upon which I must congratulate you, and that is that, besides the great extension of the suffrage, you have seen a large addition to the Parliamentary power of Scotland by the raising of the numbers that represented her from fifty-eight to seventy. On a very early occasion in my former addresses six years ago to the people of Midlothian, I called attention to the inequality with which Scotland was treated, and I promised to do my best to redress that inequality. I hope you think that promise has been redeemed. It was not so easy a matter as, perhaps, at first sight might appear, it was all very well to acknowledge in the abstract that Scotland ought to have more members; but where were they to come from? Many a man

would say—Oh, yes, let Scotland have more members, but then do not let Ireland and England have fewer members. Then the only method was to make a small addition to the membership of the House, but the enemies of an increase of the representation were not to be circumvented in that way. Directly I proposed an increase of the members of the House a universal howl was raised by the Tory papers, and all the—what shall I call them?—the temporising papers of the age. They all cried out, “Oh, as to increasing the members of the House that is intolerable.” They said distribute fairly the members now allotted to the three Kingdoms, but do not increase the numbers of the House. But we know very well what would have happened if we had not increased the numbers of the House. All the English members and all the Irish members would have made common cause to sit upon Scotland, and instead of getting twelve new members, Scotland at most would have had difficulty in getting six or five or four. So we stuck to our point. And when it came to the final issue, the reasonableness of the claim could not be denied, and Scotland was in possession of a proportion of members which at length gives her something like equal justice in comparison with the other portions of the United Kingdom.

MR. PARNELL'S INVITATION.

The first purpose which presented itself to me when I came to Scotland was to make the Liberal party sensible—so far as I could contribute to that great object—of the singular weight of obligation that now rests upon it to maintain on the occasion of this election its close and hearty political union. I pointed to one particular reason in the very interesting and memorable state of the near relations of Ireland and Great Britain, and pointed out that it was very possible that in a constitutional form, and by an overwhelming majority of her members, the Irish nation might present some demand—I am confident that Ireland will never forget her duty to the union of this Empire—but that she might present some demand for a large change in the management of her local affairs, a demand which, as I said, ought to be received with attention and respect. I need not say that if at any time it should happen that it was the public opinion of Scotland that without the smallest disparagement to its duty as a member of the United Kingdom there ought to be some administrative change given to Scotland, a more exclusive power in the management of certain local affairs, I have no knowledge whether such demand will arise, it has not been discussed, the subject is totally immature, but I only say that if the people of Scotland with their solidity of judgment, thought fit to make such a demand, I have no doubt that also would receive most considerate and favourable attention. Since that occurrence—since I made a declaration to that effect—Mr. Parnell has conveyed to me through the confidential channel of the public Press a suggestion that I had better frame a plan for giving this local government to Ireland. I propose to make my reply to Mr. Parnell in a manner equally confidential, and I have no doubt you will not mention it, and that none of our friends who sit at these tables will think of reporting it. My reasons against complying with

that demand are these—that what I have said is that the wish of Ireland clearly and constitutionally expressed deserves our most respectful and favourable attention. But then I observe at once that I do not yet know what the wish of Ireland is, nor shall I know it, nor can it be constitutionally expressed until after the election which is now approaching. And I must also say that I believe Mr. Parnell must have taken me to be very much wanting in experience of public life, or not perhaps to have profited by the experience I have had; because that experience teaches me that if I were so rash as to make myself the volunteer physician of the people of Ireland instead of those authorised doctors whom she is going to send by and by to the House of Commons, I should not only exhibit myself in a capacity I do not wish to fill before the public, but I should seriously damage any proposal which might have been hatched in my mind. I am not in the Government of the country. If any great constitutional question arises with respect to the government of Ireland, and if a proposal has to be made, that proposal can only be made effectively by the Government of the country; and although the Government of the country have been rather silent upon this subject, and appear to be most disinclined to use any language that might put them for a moment in less easy relations with the party from over the Channel, to whom they owe so much in the transactions of the last Parliament, if they continue to be the Government of the country any rational man in Opposition will require to hear what they have got to say upon the subject before making up his own mind. I therefore think that I have given tolerably good reasons why, with every courtesy to Mr. Parnell, it is impossible for me to accede to the kind invitation he has given me.

“THE BACKBONE OF THE PARTY.”

I have had to address a meeting in Edinburgh upon the subject of the disestablishment of your Church, which excites great interest in the country; and as it was my duty on that occasion to recommend, so far as I might presume to recommend, and I do not overrate my authority on that matter or suppose I have little or any duty or right beyond that of saying what conscientiously appears to me to be for the interest of the party and country—in the exercise of that duty I had to make an announcement which no doubt was painful and disappointing to some of those not only favourable in principle to disestablishment but who likewise think the time has come for giving effect to that desire. Well, I am bound to acknowledge the kindness and patience and generosity with which that declaration of mine has been received. It was a conscientious declaration dictated to me by consideration of the whole case as it presented itself to my mind. It may seem strange to you that I should show a disinclination to admit into the plan of action for the coming Parliament other great subjects besides those I have already enumerated. I ventured to present to the country what may be termed a limited programme or scheme of action, and others have tried to make additions to it. Some people have said that I should put out reform of the House of Lords, the abolition of the House of Lords, and put in disestablishment

of the Church. Pray, gentlemen, remember I am not now speaking on the merits of the question. I am speaking of the policy and the propriety of including the particular subjects in the programme which I have laid before the country. Nothing would be more easy for me than to court popular favour by presenting to you an enormous list of reforms. I have no doubt that there are many subjects calling for legislation. I have endeavoured upon a multitude of occasions to help the country to understand how woefully our legislative business is in arrear, above all to make it understand how the present condition of the House of Commons and its rules renders it essential, in order to make proper progress with legislation, that those rules should be changed, which of itself would amount to a great public measure. After sitting in twelve Parliaments a man begins to have, if he has any brains at all, the capacity and faculty of knowing what a particular Parliament can do and is likely to do, and therefore, instead of adopting the more popular course of dealing with this, that, and the other, I have put together those subjects which appeared not to me only, but, so far as I could judge, to the best heads and the best minds throughout the party to have the strongest claims on public attention. I have limited myself to these subjects and I believe I was right in that limitation. At the same time I am aware that I make a heavy draft upon the patience of gentlemen whose hearts and souls are in the prosecution of certain other questions when I respectfully endeavour to lay before them the appeal that at this juncture the object of their desires is not in my judgment practicable, and more especially am I sensible of the responsibility of making that draft upon their patience when I remember what undoubtedly will be admitted on all hands—that those favourable to the disestablishment of the Church in Scotland not only constitute a very large portion of the Liberal party, but likewise are, as I may say, the backbone of the party, are men who have never deviated from the steadiness of their purpose, men with regard to whom you may say that you always know where they are, that you always know when a public case comes forward they will not be finding small reasons and petty excuses for not supporting it, but whenever they see the cause of right and justice they will go straight to the mark. Therefore, sir, I wish to render my respectful acknowledgment to those gentlemen for the kindness with which they have tolerated me in the expression of a conscientious opinion.

SEVERANCE OF THE QUESTIONS OF SCOTCH AND ENGLISH DISESTABLISHMENT.

One more word I will say. I know very well they attach the utmost value, and in my opinion they are right to attach the utmost value, to a complete severance between the two questions of Disestablishment in Scotland and Disestablishment in England. But, gentlemen, that severance is a principle to which I for one am pledged. I am pledged to maintain and promote it to the best of my ability. So is Lord Hartington, and so I think are those gentlemen who have taken an active part in advising on the concerns of the Liberal party. It is not altogether a matter of course that we shall succeed in it, and I venture

to assure you that if on this occasion the Liberal party in Scotland had made the sole question of Disestablishment the test of supporting or opposing candidates the effect would have been this—the same thing would have been done in England. On the other side, the supporters of the Church Establishment in England, who are exceedingly numerous and powerful both in the Liberal party and the Conservative party, never would have listened to this proposal to keep the questions separate. They would have made the Scotch question, as the English question, their question, and in my opinion the people of Scotland would have suffered severely from that intermixture of English questions with theirs, and from the risk, the serious risk, the almost certainty, that the balance of English opinion would have governed ultimately the question in Scotland. I have laboured and shall labour to keep these questions apart, and I believe the advice which I have ventured to give on the present occasion, however unpalatable it may be to many, is the most salutary and unfailing for the purpose of preserving that severance between the two questions which I hope and believe almost every Scotchman desires to maintain.

TACTICS OF THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION.

Since I came to Scotland I have said nothing upon the subject of the present Government, and I must say something in respect to them, and with regard to them I shall speak plainly, but at the same time I hope not under the influence of any blind party spirit, and certainly not with a desire to perpetrate any conscious injustice. There are two things to be considered; one is the conduct of this Government, and the other is the treatment which this Government is to receive. What I am disposed to wish, if I were to sum it all up in one single sentence, would be this. I should wish that their conduct should be as like ours as it was possible, and I should wish that the treatment which they receive may be as unlike as possible the treatment we received. In regard to that treatment I speak principally of the House of Commons; and I speak principally of the foreign policy of the country with regard to what I must observe—that nothing could be more injurious to Imperial interests than the incessant questioning, than the suggestions of mischievous character put from day to day, without number and without limit, in the shape of questions on matters of the utmost delicacy and difficulty, and weakening to the uttermost the influence of those who represent the interests of the country in the councils of Europe. Nothing could be more injurious and nothing could be more unjustifiable, because these were not questions put and difficulties created in order to give satisfaction to some great and sacred internal conviction. They were fighting for no principle against us; they had been only put from a disposition to do mischief to their political opponents, with a culpable indifference whether, in the attempt to annoy their political opponents, they were or were not wounding the vital interests of the country. I have done with that, but I will point, however, to some matters I have stated, connected with the conduct of the present Government. I by no means have to make it a subject of universal complaint.

THE SOUDAN.

The most dangerous of all matters that we have had to deal with in the course of the last few years has been the question of the Soudan. It has cost this country some blood and much treasure, and I have admitted with regret that I could not say we in every instance and every step of our difficult path arrived at a right judgment. I think in some points not immaterial with respect to the Soudan it is clear that we fell into error. What I have said is this—that there was not an error that we have committed that was not fostered by the party opposite, and that the complaint against us amounts simply to this—that we did not commit more errors and greater. There may be some who think that that is a sweeping accusation. Let me illustrate it by a particular point. The question was immediately brought up on our quitting office whether it was desirable or not to continue the evacuation of the Soudan. We held that it was, that no good was to be done, and that great mischief was to be done, by organizing efforts for the purpose of the conquest of that country or for the purpose of establishing a government according to our ideas in that country. That is our opinion; we place it before you for your judgment. What did the incoming Government say? The incoming Government said that that opinion was a great mistake, that we ought to have continued military operations in the Soudan, that we ought to have remained there until we had established by military force institutions for the government of that savage country. But it was added that our policy, our acts, had gone too far and could not be recalled, consequently that evacuation was to be continued, and we were to close our accounts with the Soudan. I lay that before you, because the statement is a fact which is perfectly unquestionable—namely, that we in principle contended for leaving the Soudan; that our opponents contended in principle against it and said we should continue there, but it was too late to do it. That will enable you to judge whether I am unreasonable when I say that the complaint of our opponents against us was not against the errors which we committed but because we did not commit more and greater errors, and because, when the errors became palpable, we did not persevere and push them to extremities. Do you think it would have been wise for you to have continued military operations, which were never intended for the conquest of the Soudan, for this wild purpose, and in defiance of climate, circumstances, and political relations—for this wild purpose of establishing institutions there by force over the head and ears of the people? If you think that was wise, then condemn us, and give your support to those who are now in power; but, if the reverse, then I think you will understand a little from what I have now said what I mean when I say that such errors as we have committed in regard to the Soudan were embraced and would have been exaggerated by the policy of the opposite party.

THE DUTY OF AN OPPOSITION.

Another important question is with regard to the frontier of Afghanistan. We were called upon to consider, on the part of the Ameer of Afghanistan, the particulars of his frontier towards the territory which Russia had immediately become possessed of, and certain measures were adopted in full concurrence with the Ameer of Afghanistan. We adopted lines which we thought just and conscientious. We went out of office, a new Government came in, and with great satisfaction I may say that the new Government has adhered—we are not in possession of official information, but I believe the whole world knows enough to be aware that the new Government has adhered—upon that question to the lines we laid down, and I am also happy to understand that proceedings are going forward and are expected to reach a satisfactory termination. Therefore, on that matter I delight to give credit. I am not a perfectly impartial judge; of course, the credit I give to them is that of agreeing with us. I am very glad to give it, but there are some among them that do not consider that a great credit. I hope you estimate it a little more favourably. I must observe, however, that I distinguish between the two questions of conduct and treatment, and whereas in the conduct there is nothing to find fault with since the new Government came into office, on the other hand, the treatment has certainly been very different. I will deal with one point. When we were in office and were dealing in concert with the Ameer we had offered certain terms to Russia, and we meant to adhere to them, but the Opposition, especially by the mouth of one of its most favoured members, now Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill immediately declared that it had heard with pain and shame the declarations made by the Prime Minister, which showed how the interests and honour of the country had been trampled under foot. That was the sort of assistance we used to get in working these questions. When the new Government came in, when they examined the matter, when they saw that in point of justice and policy there was no choice—I take no particular credit for what we did; there was no choice in point of justice and policy, there was no other alternative for honest, reasonable, enlightened men—when they came in and followed our course we offered them the very best support in our power. We assured them that in prosecuting that policy, without at all attempting to tie their hands as to details and particulars in the prosecution of that policy, they should have all the assistance we could give just as if we ourselves had continued in power and had been looking for the assistance of our friends. I hope we shall continue on that footing, I can only say that I have the deepest sense of the responsibility and guilt of interfering with Ministers concerned in carrying on the foreign affairs of the country except with clear and full knowledge and in deference to strong, conscientious convictions. Upon these grounds it may be a duty to interfere, as Lord Chatham interfered at the time of the American war, as Mr. Fox interfered at the time of the Revolutionary war—and what would he not have saved this country had his voice swayed their counsels! But, as a rule, in the absence of better know-

ledge, in the absence of definite convictions, in the absence of better counsels, it is our duty not to weaken the hands of the representatives of our country. I will say this also with respect to Afghanistan. You recollect the condition in which Afghanistan was at the time when we came into power. Afghanistan was broken to pieces, the gray hairs of an old sovereign had just been brought down with sorrow to the grave, its independence was destroyed, it was kept down by British arms. I ask you how we should have looked Russia in the face when she came to make her claims. She would have found Afghanistan full of friends and allies ready to join her in opposition, and the invader she would have recognised as the liberator of the country. Instead of that, opposed and censured by the Tory Opposition, we brought peace into Afghanistan. We witnessed with satisfaction the establishment of a competent, and I believe experience has shown an honest ruler, the present Ameer Abdurrahman. We gave peace and independence back to the country. We withdrew our army, the 60,000 men in Afghanistan and on the frontier were reduced by 40,000 men, and 20,000 men did the work so far as the defence of India was concerned, and did it better. I tremble to think of the position in which we should have stood if Russia had had Afghanistan for her friend and if we had been there in the condition of persons exercising a foreign domination without cause or warrant in defiance of the sentiment of the country.

"A DEPLORABLE SPECTACLE."

Another question I will touch on—and again, though at present imperfectly informed, I rejoice to say that I have no fault to find with the policy which the Government are pursuing—and that is the extraordinary controversy which has arisen, now unfortunately provoked and inflamed into acts of positive war, in the Balkan peninsula. I think, so far as I know what is going on, that Lord Salisbury deserves credit for the course which he has taken in regard to the recent transactions in that peninsula. When the two portions of Bulgaria which were united by the Treaty of San Stefano and disjoined by the Treaty of Berlin again united themselves by a popular movement, that self-love of which I suppose most of us are conscious and by which all of us are on some occasions swayed, might have prompted Lord Salisbury to take a strong and indignant position against those who attempted to change the Treaty of Berlin. On the contrary, he appears to have taken a prudent and practical view of the case, and to have been disposed to respect the desire of the Bulgarian peoples north and south of the Balkans to form one political community. Now war has been created, war has been begun, not by the interference of the Sultan or the Turkish Government, who I think deserve on this occasion the credit of having some prudence and moderation; not by the interference of the Great Powers, against whom, at any rate, no charge can be made; least of all through the action of the English Government, who appear to have been desirous to give fair attention to the claims of popular liberty in that peninsula; but through the claims set up by the people of Servia and the people of Greece. The people of Greece have happily confined themselves to a

remonstrance or action within their own border, but Servia has made war on the people of Bulgaria. In my opinion that war is a deplorable spectacle. I have to say that the Servians owed their liberty in 1878 or 1877—I forget which it was, in 1877 I think—to the intervention of the European Powers, who would not allow the Sultan of Turkey to re-establish dominion over them. I think to see these territories incurring the risk and responsibility of carrying bloodshed into the territory of other people, other populations, to whom they were united by the recollection of centuries of common suffering and degradation—to see this war so provoked and so carried on is one of the most mournful spectacles which ever met my eyes. I will not undertake to tell you what ought to be done in this difficult circumstance. All that I will say is, as far as I am able to judge, the Government of the day, with Lord Salisbury at its head, and Lord Salisbury holding the seals of the Foreign Department, have been regulating their proceedings by sound principles of which no Englishman need be ashamed. And so long as they continue to direct themselves on that question upon those principles, as far as I am concerned, and I am sure I can answer for those who have been my colleagues, they will receive our best support.

THE ATTACK ON EARL SPENCER.

I trust you will see that I do not wish to proceed with regard to the Government in a spirit of indiscriminate and sweeping condemnation; nor is it necessary. But I come to matters at home upon which I cannot speak in terms of so much favour. Some bills were passed by the Government in conjunction with the Liberal leaders for which I think they deserve credit. But there are two questions on which I think their proceedings are open to serious exception. In the first place, I think no graver error was ever committed by a Government, and I am bound to say that Lord Salisbury took an early opportunity of disclaiming, so far as he could with decency, the proceedings of his colleagues in the House of Commons—no graver error ever was committed than when two members of the Cabinet in particular, perhaps the two most important members of it in the House of Commons, took the opportunity of a discussion with regard to the administration of justice in Ireland to condemn largely the conduct and administration of Lord Spencer. You know how we stand in this country. We have sharp party differences, but those party differences in general touch matters which are not elementary and fundamental in government. These are certain subjects upon which all parties and all Governments are supposed to pull together, and among these are questions connected with the administration of justice. I can only say that I am aware of no instance in which party distinctions have been made to sway the conduct of political leaders in such a way as to lead them to condemn the conduct that they condemned in Lord Spencer. Lord Spencer is a man who is well known as of the very highest character, of great experience in Ireland, and of marked ability, and he has been labouring to the best of his ability—not infallibly, but to the best of his ability—for the good administration of justice in Ireland. I lament I cannot but

gravely condemn the language which was used towards him, not only by the noble lord to whom I have referred, but by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach as leader of the House of Commons. I do not wish to excite feeling, especially in regard to any Irish matter; therefore I pass from this subject. I wish to make this protest on behalf more of elementary principles of government and public order than on behalf of Lord Spencer, whose character and position are such that he needs no vindication, and nothing can injure him in the estimation of his countrymen.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON TRADE.

But there is another subject I wish to dwell upon, because it is prospective. I cannot but disapprove and lament the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the distress of the country. There is no more plausible proceeding than, when there is difficulty, to appoint a Royal Commission to make an inquiry. It takes it off the shoulders of the Executive Government, it takes it off the shoulders of those who are responsible, and places it upon the shoulders of those men who are not responsible at all. I have no doubt the members of the Royal Commission will do their best, but you have no hold upon them, and whatever they report will be made use of to diminish the responsibility of Ministers, to whom you ought to look, and who, if no available remedies are at hand, ought to have the courage to say so. Do not suppose that I am here to question the fact that distress has prevailed in the country; but this I must say that those who are as old as I am will be able to make useful and fruitful comparisons between the distress of the last few years and the distress that I recollect in my youth, the cases of distress and the period of distress that occurred between the year 1815 and the passing of the Reform Bill. These were periods indeed severe. The characteristic of the present distress has been this, that as regards capital there has been a great diminution of the profits, a good deal of stagnation, and a very large amount of suffering in certain branches of industry, such as agriculture and the coal industry; but it has been attended with this mitigating circumstance, that there has not been general and severe distress among the working population of the country. No doubt in the coal trade and in the shipping trade—perhaps these are the most remarkable interests—there has been a diminution of employment, and with that diminution of employment considerable distress, which I deeply lament; but you must regard this fact—that most of the working population of the country have during the last two or three years been enjoying the benefit of access to articles of food and articles of clothing upon better terms than they ever knew before. There are a great number of people in whose eyes it appears that if capitalists are not quite so well off as they were the question of the condition of the working classes is secondary. I exactly reverse these two positions. I say that if the mass of the people, who are really dependent on their daily labour, are relatively not ill off in the greater portion of our branches of industry, it is a matter for great regret, but still it is a secondary matter, to know that the accumulation of capital is not going on quite as rapidly as it did. Then, gentlemen, the question arises are

there remedies for these distresses? I can only say that those who are promoters of the Royal Commission have never suggested any remedies at all, or the remedies they suggested are a great deal worse than the disease. What has been said? We are told—I did not hear it, but we are told through the usual channels—that Lord John Manners, of whom I speak with great respect for his highly amiable personal character, and likewise with an acknowledgment of his high qualities for debate—Lord John Manners has stated that if the Royal Commission recommend it he is ready to impose a duty upon foreign manufactures; and Lord Salisbury, it appears, has likewise stated that the duty upon foreign manufactures would be the remedy for the distress.

“YOUR OLD FRIEND THE CORN TAX.”

Well, no great branch of industry has felt the distress so severely as the farming and agricultural industry, and I want to know what their condition is to be when, though they are suffering extremely from a violent fall in prices, and though they have always been told, from the time when I was a baby, that the Tory party were their true friends, these true friends do not seem—at least Lord John Manners and Lord Salisbury do not seem—to have any better remedy to propose for relieving the farmer than a tax upon foreign manufactures. So that the sole consolation the farmer is to have is that, if he uses many articles of manufacture from abroad, he will have to pay higher for them than he used to do. But there is a snake in the grass. This taxation upon foreign manufacture has behind it something still more serious and the revival of what as yet no one has had the courage to name, but if devices like this Commission get countenance you will hear of it soon enough, and that is your old friend—a tax upon corn. There is an important gentleman in the present Government. He is not in the Cabinet, but he holds the high office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—I mean Mr. Chaplin—who has distinctly avowed the doctrine that there ought to be, as I understand, and I think I have heard it with my own ears—distinctly avowed there ought to be a tax upon foreign corn. It is melancholy as well as revolting that at this time of day we should be discussing such topics or have any occasion to refer to them. For twenty-five years of my life the whole country was fighting this subject of protection against free trade. If you examine the years between 1837-8 and 1861-2 you will find that almost the entire work of legislation—almost everything connected with popular and national progress—was arrested in order that we might solve the great problem, the great controversy raised between free and limited trade. This country is slow in its processes of legislation, yet though we are slow we are sure, and when we have made a great step we do not go back upon it. Is it not to be considered as serious that at this day any Liberal should be seduced away from his colours to support this piece of quackery that is called a Royal Commission, without plan, without purpose, without compass, and without guidance, with no definite creed or object, only with the latent purpose in the minds of some who did not like to speak it out that the system of free commerce was again to be set aside and a

system of restricted and bound-up commerce brought again on the statute-book of this country?

A FISHING ENQUIRY.

I believe I speak here chiefly in the centre of a mining industry. You would begin by having a tax upon any manufactured article that you should want, and you would go on with having to pay a higher price for your bread. These are woeful delusions, and I am certain they will not gull the men of this country. I do not believe that in this crowded assembly there are probably ten men or five men or perhaps not one man capable of being taken in by such proceedings as these. If there had been a national aim and object, if there had been something to point to some particular law which it was thought bore hardly on any industry, it would have been quite right to examine whether that was so, or whether it was not. But this is an inquiry at large. It is what is called in the familiar language of the lobbies of Parliament a fishing inquiry. They go and fish for something to say about the distress, but you cannot get your fish unless there are fish to be got, and they do not know where the fish are, or whether they will catch any fish at all. But then they know that it is a plausible and well-sounding scheme for the weak-minded portion of the community who say—"What a benevolent Government you have got. The moment that they come into office, or at any rate, before they have been there a few weeks and have begun to feel in the least degree warm in the seats they occupy, they launch this Commission upon the world to find out the cause of distress." Those who are the strongest supporters of this know that ever since free trade was established, and I take the year 1846 as the greatest and most marked of all triumphs that were gained in that cause—ever since the year 1846 the wealth of the country has advanced with unexampled rapidity. The condition of the labouring man—God knows how I hope it may be further improved—has enormously improved as compared with what it was anterior to that epoch.

AN IMPOSTURE DOOMED TO BE SHORT-LIVED.

The trade of the country which had been nearly stationary from the beginning of the century till about the year 1842, when the work of reform began in earnest, had increased in a degree unexampled in the history of the world. Periods of distress formerly had been frequent and most severe—aye, so severe as to touch life. Since that time, with the single exception of the cotton famine—borne so nobly in Lancashire, and due wholly to a special cause that was beyond human agency to deal with—since that time periods of severe and great distress in the trade of the country have until the last few years been almost absolutely unknown. For nearly forty years—for between thirty and forty years we went on without those periods since the beneficent, and, I will say, blessed introduction of free trade. The best consolation I have to give you is this—I am fighting with an imposture which is doomed to be very short-lived. It cannot last long. Perhaps the Royal Commission

will look first at the most flattering portions of the subject, whatever they may be, and produce an early report as a sample of what they are hereafter to do. I know not whether they will or not, but I feel certain that before you are much older the whole of these delusive ideas will be swept away. That is, the principle of free commerce, for which Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright gave the whole purpose of their lives and of their distinguished power, for which Sir Robert Peel was expelled from the Tory party, because he would not prefer the interests of that party, or of the class to which he belonged, to the interests of his country, and to the welfare of the mass of the people—that system of free commerce is too deeply rooted, too well tested, too thoroughly approved by practical results, to be overturned by any political device, or any momentary scheme intended to mitigate the little difficulties of an election. It cannot be done; you may as well attempt to root the Pentlands from their base and tumble them into the Firth of Forth, as to induce Englishmen and Scotchmen and Irishmen to go back—at any rate, I can speak confidently for Englishmen and Scotchmen, and express my hope for our friends in Ireland also—as to induce the people of England, Scotland, and Ireland to go back into the darkness from which they suffered so long, and from which they effected their escape with such tremendous effort, and at the expense of a quarter of a century.

LIBERAL WORK IN THE PAST.

Before I close, does any one ask, "You have said some good of the Government, and you have said some things that are not good, why, after all, do you not let them remain where they are?" I will let them remain where they are as long as the majority of the electors consider they ought to remain. I think the majority of electors ought to consider that it would be better that they should not remain where they are; but why do I hold that the majority of the electors ought to be of that opinion? It is sometimes said this is all a struggle for party. I read a poem the other day in the newspapers, beginning—

"Lies upon this side and lies upon that side,"

which seems to imply that all those who are engaged in politics are, after all, a very dubious class of individuals, and that the whole thing was no more than a personal struggle. If it is a personal struggle, it certainly is a very lamentable business. I do not think it is a personal struggle. Party is an instrument, and an instrument is a thing ordained for a certain end. It is like a tool that a man uses in the mine, or the carpenter in the workshop. It is of no use in itself, but it is of use in the hands of those who use it. You have got before you two great instruments—the Tory instrument, and the Liberal instrument. Both of these purport and profess to be instruments for attaining and working out the public good. Have they done it? What is the public good? Where are you to look for it? Do not look for it so much in promises and anticipations; do not look for it so much in the mere froth of light phrases, and of sanguine minds. Look for it in the experience of the past. Look for it in the history of the country. Time

would fail me to tell—it is impossible for me to tell with accuracy, such is their fulness, the changes which you have seen within the last fifty years. Are these changes good? Have they done good in the main? Aye, have they almost universally been good, or have they not? Is it your outspoken answer that they have been beneficial, that it has been a great period, not a nominal, but a real progress of real public advantage? We have seen slavery abolished, we have seen trade liberated, we have seen the circulation through the Press of intelligence, which was formerly laden with taxes and restrictions of every kind—we have seen it set entirely free, we have seen the Universities opened, we have seen the suffrage extended, we have seen the voter protected in the independent exercise of his vote; we have seen the Church-rate—a question of great interest in England—abolished. But memory will not serve me, and I should detain you too long. Memory will not serve me to recall those great and beneficial changes of which I have just given a sample. By whom have these changes been wrought? They have been wrought by the Liberal party of the country.

TORY-LIBERALISM.

It may be said there are exceptions. What are these exceptions, and what is their peculiar character? In 1867, I admit, the name of household suffrage was first pronounced by a Tory Government. And what was the Bill introduced by that Tory Government? I assure you that it would be difficult to make it understood in Scotland, because in Scotland you have nothing, I believe, analogous to the system of what is called compound householders—at any rate, nothing that prevails so widely as in England. That Bill gave a vote only to such persons as personally paid their own rates, but there were only a few places in large towns in England where people did pay their own rates. But of all the Reform Bills introduced by Government into Parliament, that Household Suffrage Bill, as it first appeared, was the narrowest and feeblest. There was a magic in the name, the name worked like a charm. The Liberal party went to work upon the Bill; they transformed the Bill by the amendments which they introduced into it; they made a mock household suffrage into a real household suffrage. In 1829 a Tory Government headed by enlightened men of great power and great distinction, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, emancipated the Roman Catholics. What happened? The discontented members of their party turned them out of office the next year. In 1846 Sir Robert Peel, in like manner, carried the repeal of the Corn Laws, but what happened to him? The discontented members of his party did not wait so long as they did in 1829, for they turned him out of office that very year. It is a fact that these changes have been carried by Tory Governments, such as those of Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington, acting in the spirit of Liberals; but those leaders were severely punished by the Tory party for the excellent spirit they had shown. As a rule it stands the unshaken assertion that the legislative work of the country for centuries has been done by the Liberal party. The Liberal party is composed of one set of individuals, and the other

party of another set. I ask you to look at each party strictly as you look at a tool, and ask which has done the best work. If your verdict is for the Liberals, then commit the future care of the country to those whom in your judgment you think best. I believe you may safely trust those who have been brought up in Liberal principles for so many years, those who have laboured for you for so many years, as the Liberal party has laboured, to carry out good and enlightened measures for the benefit of the nation. They are not going to turn their back upon that beneficent course of proceeding, but in what will remain of life and ability they will persevere in the application of those principles which they received and were at once dictated by their consciences, and known by their understandings to be fraught with benefit to the people.

THE LAND—THE PEOPLE—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

(AT DALKEITH, NOVEMBER 21, 1885.)

FOR the last fortnight I have been among you in the character of your candidate; I hope before we are a week older I shall bear the character of your representative. To you who wish to know the view that I take of my duties in that character—if you, gentlemen, are pleased to return me, and if I continue to enjoy the confidence of the Liberal party, and to be regarded as its leader—it will be my duty to put forward, to the best of my ability, the views of that party as a whole.

NEITHER ADVANCED LIBERAL NOR MODERATE LIBERAL.

I have never been what is called a Moderate Liberal, and I have never been what is called an Advanced Liberal; I have always found the name of Liberal without any sort of epithet or appendage quite sufficient to describe whatever in me is worthy of description. I shall adhere to that view of my position, and if I go to Parliament I go there to promote not what is partial, not what is sectional, but the general matured convictions of the whole Liberal party, with which it is my delight to be connected. Now, sir, I think, if we compare our position at this moment with that of the opposite party it is not unsatisfactory. This is not the first time, gentlemen, that the country has had a dissolution with which it has been favoured for the purpose of determining the title to confidence of a Tory Government.

Three times before this has it happened, and this is the fourth time that Parliament has been dissolved in order to say whether a Tory Administration should remain in power. It was so dissolved in 1852, in 1859, and in 1867. The response of the country to the question upon those three occasions was perfectly intelligible, and was absolutely concordant—it was in the negative, and it would be a strange thing, I think, if, especially after the great change that has taken place in the Franchise, the country were to deviate from the happy uniformity of practice to which I am persuaded that it will adhere as resolutely, and perhaps even more emphatically, than upon former occasions. Indeed, when I consider what it is for which our opponents are hoping, I cannot envy them. I have said everywhere that I trust you will return a Liberal party able to sway the destinies of the country in the coming Parliament, because, especially taking into view those necessities that may arise in connection with the Government of the sister island, nothing, I think, could be more dangerous to the public weal than that they should be huddled in a Parliament where there was no party strong enough to direct its action according to its judgment and conscience, without being liable to be seduced from the right path by the temptation which might be offered to it by the vote of the Irish members. But that, I understand, is the summit of the hopes of the Tory party in this election; not that they may obtain such a national verdict as will enable them, possessing the confidence of Parliament as a whole, to direct their course, but that they may obtain such an amount of strength in a minority as, with the assistance of a large Irish contingent, may be made into a majority. Gentlemen, I must say—I am entitled, I think, to say—that is not a state of things which we could accept as a party. But I may go further, and say it is not a state of things that would be safe or honourable to the country.

“THE DELUSIONS OF FAIR TRADE.”

Now, what are the weapons that are used against us upon this occasion? One of them is that delusion of what is called Fair Trade. It is always a bad sign, gentlemen, when any body of men, or professors of any political creed, find it necessary to discover a new name under which to represent themselves. It shows that the old name is worn out, while the old purpose remains. The cloak of Protection is now by far too ragged. It is so full of holes, that it will not rest on any man's shoulders. But Fair Trade has been polished up to do duty in its stead; and, gentlemen, I hope you may have had an opportunity of refreshing your minds and memories by observing in the *Scotsman* of yesterday some most sound and excellent doctrines upon this subject, quoted from a pamphlet—a lecture delivered by Lord Iddesleigh when he was Sir Stafford Northcote—in which he manfully lifted the banner of Free Trade, perhaps rather late in the day. But still he lifted it. He said it must be resolutely upheld; and, above all, he said, “Nothing can be so mischievous as the adoption of any measure which can lead any portion of the people to question and doubt whether there was or was not a firm intention to stand by the system of Free Trade.” Gen-

tlemen, that is a golden sentence. I know not how to reconcile it with the appointment of a commission which, if it has any substantive purpose at all in view, if it has anything like an intelligible sketch in view, has no other sketch to afford, nor other hope to its promotion, except that in some way or other that system of free commerce, which we adopted after so much consideration, and after so long and obstinate a struggle, that system of free commerce may be once again undermined. It is a commission apparently appointed with this for its purpose—to do the very thing Sir Stafford Northcote said was the worst thing that could be done—to raise doubt, question, and speculation in the minds of the portion of the community which is capable of being misled on the subject as to the resolute conduct of the people and the legislature to maintain freedom of trade.

DANGEROUS MEN.

Well, gentlemen, I will not trouble you now, having dealt with it on a former occasion; I will not trouble you upon the question of disestablishment, because I think you are all aware that whatever the wishes of any one may be, one cannot always comply with those wishes; but it will be partly my main purpose to show how full already, by anticipation and proposal, are the hands of the coming Parliament. If you wish to get into a particular compartment of a railway train, there is one reason that is absolutely conclusive against it, and that is if the compartment is already as full as it can hold, and in my opinion—you will judge whether I am reasonable in holding that opinion—in my opinion it would be idle to think of adding other great subjects beside those that have been generally accepted by the Liberal party to the programme of the coming Parliament.

But, gentlemen, there is another weapon that is used against us. As it is generally felt, after all, that Liberalism is the strongest political creed in the country, there is of course, and very naturally—I cannot much blame it—a desire to produce division among Liberals: and the way that is used is this—To persuade them that they have got among them very dangerous men indeed, men who go by the name of Radicals. Now, of these Radicals, and of the desire that exists in the minds of our Tory friends to divide the Liberal party by insinuating the idea of danger from these Radicals, I will say this, in the first place, that this plea, this topic, is a standing dish in the Tory banquet. As long as I have been alive it has been the practice to say, "The moderate Liberals are all very well, but there are extremely dangerous men among you, and you must get rid of those dangerous men;" and thereby they have the hope to frighten those among us who have the weakest nerves, and to draw them off into the Tory ranks. This game, gentlemen, has not been very prosperous and successful. At the same time, it may appear to promise something, and it is pursued at the present time with very great eagerness. The fact is, gentlemen, it is a necessity of Toryism always to have some bugbear to present to the people. Joseph Hume for a long time served this purpose for the Tories, and was exhibited to the people as the great bugbear. But people never had a more faithful and honourable

servant than Joseph Hume, although I won't say I share every opinion he may have entertained. He is a man whose memory we hold in honour, and whom the Liberal party could ill afford to lose. Well, for a long time Mr. O'Connell was the great bugbear held up to the country. Then came Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, and for many years those two men—one of them too early if I may presume to say so, too early, at any rate, for our wishes, taken from us, and the other, still in a vigorous old age, among us—those two have earned a place in the hearts of Englishmen for years and generations yet to come. They were held up to the world as dangerous men, from whom the Constitution and the Throne required to be rescued.

AND EVEN I !

There was a time, I can assure you—perhaps it is rather egotistical to say so—but there was a period when I was Chancellor of the Exchequer, about five and twenty years ago, in several years of that period I myself for a considerable time served the purpose of a bugbear, and was exhibited everywhere as a violent, dangerous man—so reckless and so wild that there was no saying what he would next propose. Of late I think Mr. Chamberlain has pretty well succeeded me. But, gentlemen, we must judge questions upon their own merits. I hear a great deal said about Radicalism. Now, that Radicalism is too bold and too forward, and that many schemes of organic change are propounded which would lead to great division of opinion and difficult controversies. I am not going to raise a discussion on that point. I am too old to change that frame of mind, that general frame of mind, with which I look upon political questions ; and it is not for me to say whether men's opinions are tending to be too advanced or not. I have known extremes in the direction of stagnation. It is possible that these may be extremes in the direction of precipitate movement.

TORY DEMOCRACY.

But two things I wish to say ; if there is any danger of that kind, any danger of tendency to extremes among those who are called Radicals, there are two causes which I should mention as eminently tending to promote that state of things. One of them is the recent invention of what is termed Tory Democracy. What, gentlemen, is Tory Democracy ? It is an attempt very different, indeed, from that of Sir Robert Peel, who never affected to court mere prejudice of passion even in a people, but who was always desirous of finding a moderate course, and of adopting enlightened measures wherever he saw them to be without danger. No, gentlemen, this is an attempt to outbid Radicals in their own market by pushing popular opinions further than Radicals push them. And these gentlemen who have invented the idea of Tory Democracy have such confidence in their own invention that they think that is the way by which they will, as it were, get behind the Radical camp and attack them in front and rear, and draw over the people to themselves. Now, gentlemen, I will not speak of the question of principle, or ask what

sort of standard of political integrity and character you are to expect in connection with Tory Democracy, but I will say this, that Tory Democracy, so far from being a means of adding real strength to Toryism, is a means of adding great strength to Radicalism, because those Tory Democrats ought to perceive that whenever they adopt a Radical proposition that point upon which they mean to take their stand for their own convenience becomes a new point of departure for the Radicals, upon which they found fresh plans, fresh expectants, and fresh engagements. I give you, gentlemen, an instance. I daresay you all know that the Radicals are supposed to have a leaning very adverse to indirect taxation, that Tories, on the other hand, are great upholders of indirect taxation, for it is through indirect taxation that the masses of the people chiefly contribute to the expenditure of the State. Well, now, what happened this year? We introduced a Budget, in which we combined together as honourably and fairly as we could, direct and indirect taxation. The Tories made and carried a motion against our Budget, not because they objected to the indirect taxation—what they objected to was another element of the Budget, namely, an increased taxation through the medium of the death duties upon land. But, gentlemen, they had not the courage to found their motion of objection upon that portion of the Budget. They knew very well what would be the effect upon the country if they made such a motion, so they were obliged to attempt to wound our direct taxation upon the land through the medium of our indirect taxation. That was the great scheme in which they succeeded upon the 8th June. That is a true Radical or Tory Democratic scheme. But what has been the end of it? What was their Budget? How did they modify the Budget—these great friends of indirect taxation? They modified our Budget by throwing over the indirect taxation altogether. Was it possible to give a more conspicuous triumph to Radicalism than that that step should be taken by Toryism?

SO MUCH THE WORSE FOR THE LORDS.

There is another cause, which I am sorry to say tends to provoke extreme things, and that is a cause to which I shall advert very briefly, and with deep regret, viz., that there is a certain amount of disintegration going on amongst a portion of the Liberal party which has hitherto been found in the very highest stations of the country, and in the House of Lords. I am sorry to confess that the Liberal party in the House of Lords is weaker at this time than it was thirty, forty, or fifty years ago. It certainly has not been the fault of its leader, for if ever there was a man calculated to make Liberalism acceptable in that assembly by his tact and judgment, that man is Lord Granville. Again, you know, gentlemen, what happened last year; you know the great danger into which the House of Lords had brought itself by its most unwise rejection of the Franchise Bill. You know that we, the Liberal Government, exerted ourselves with all the energy in our power, to save the House of Lords from that perilous position. We did secure the enfranchisement of the people, and relieved the Houses of Parliament from the dilemma into which they had been most wantonly

and unnecessarily plunged. Notwithstanding that, I regret to say that even this year has been marked by some further progress in a disintegrating process by which one peer and then another peer drops off from the Liberal party and joins the ranks of its opponents. Gentlemen, this is deeply to be lamented. It does not matter to the Liberal party whether it is supported by a large number of peers or by a smaller number, but it has been an honourable and a most valuable characteristic of British history, that the people and the cause of the people have never been in a condition in which they did not find expositors of their creed and leaders of their movement among the highest families in the country. That has been one great reason why our political movement has exhibited a stability not very common in other countries, and it has been a great reason, also, why in this country the union of classes has been preserved in a remarkable degree. What I foresee is this, that should this dwindling of the Liberal party in the highest ranks proceed, it will make no sensible or appreciable difference in the strength of the House of Lords, and it may tend to accelerate the movement of ideas beyond its natural and legitimate order of advance. Therefore, I am of opinion that it is really not Liberalism, but it is in the first place a most new fangled and outlandish invention of Toryism called Tory democracy, and it is in the second place a certain want of political nerve among some portion of those who have heretofore constituted the Liberal party, that, so far as I know, may tend to give an impulsion to Radicalism and to extreme opinions, beyond that which for legitimate causes it ought to enjoy.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

I have said—and I will proceed to redeem my pledge—I wish to show that, although the subjects may appear to be dry, yet those subjects we have before us for the coming Parliament are subjects of immense importance, and subjects that must of necessity make very large demands upon the time, upon the prudence, and upon the energy of those who are to constitute the Parliament. I take first the question of local government, and I will take it without including in it, for the present, the larger aspect of the subject which may possibly be raised in connection with the kingdom of Ireland, but I will look at it for England and for Scotland only. Now local government, gentlemen, is highly prized and valued in this country, and I would almost say that it can never be valued highly enough. I prize it, in the first place, because it brings home into almost every house in the country, in one shape or another, the ideas and the calls of public duty, and because through local government an immense number of individuals of almost all classes in the community are called on to step out of the narrow circle of merely selfish considerations, and embrace that noble idea of doing something for their fellow creatures, for their neighbours, for their parish, for their country at large, be it what it may, in one or other of all those local duties with which we are so familiar—to perform that duty, and even at the sacrifice of their own time. It is through these local government duties that the people of this country have acquired that remarkable self-governing capacity, and that power of

proceeding from smaller things to greater things, from local interests and concerns to imperial interests and concerns, and have shown themselves fit—aye, and fit at short notice—to enter upon the duties of Parliament and the duties of political office. The system of silent growth of habit of mind, and capacities of mind, which fit them for the discharge of public affairs is everywhere maintained among us by local government, and it would be maintained of course far more perfectly if those popular principles of representation and control which at present are only applied in part to local government were made to pervade it universally, and to place it upon the foundations which alone we can recognise as thoroughly sound, legitimate, and effective. Further, local government, gentlemen, has the advantage of raising up bodies in every portion of the country, not municipal only, but rural; and it is the rural districts that labour now under the greatest deficiencies in this important respect. It has the advantage of raising up bodies who can do for the community, in a variety of ways, work that cannot otherwise be done to meet their wants and provide for their well-being. As you see from the happy action of the municipalities in the towns, they can provide for their well-being in many movements which would not otherwise become available.

SMALL HOLDINGS.

Now lately it has been proposed, I think by Mr. Chamberlain, that local authorities should be entrusted with the power of taking, even compulsorily, land from the landed proprietors for the purpose of placing it in the hands of the labouring population. But, gentlemen, I cannot wonder that energetic, patriotic men, whether they be Radicals or whether they be Liberals, should at any rate have their minds turned in this direction. There can be no doubt that the severance of the people from the land to the extent to which it has been carried is a serious evil in this country. There is considerable difficulty about compulsory expropriation. You may possibly recollect—I recollect very well—that when I had the honour of soliciting your suffrages in 1879–80 I said that the Legislature had an undoubted title to expropriate every landlord if it were required for the public good. That is a proposition, I think, quite unquestionable. There are very many difficulties attending partial expropriation, and I will not say more upon the subject, as far as compulsion is concerned, which ought to be carefully considered. In principle it is not unsound, because compulsory expropriation for an adequate purpose is the law and practice of the country, of course—with proper compensation—but the application of the principle requires consideration in order to prevent failure and secure efficiency. Now, I wish to do this justice to a period of our history which I cannot call a good period. I mean the last years of the reign of George III.—years which were unhappily marked, I would now say branded, by the passing of unconstitutional and repressive laws. But in the year 1819, it is rather a curious circumstance that the Legislature of the day—and I have no doubt the Tory Government of the day—did acknowledge that to find land for the agricultural labourers to cultivate was a great public object, and they passed

an Act, the 59th of George III., chapter 12, under which, in sections 12 and 13, power was given to churchwardens, overseers, and parochial authorities to acquire land for the very purpose of letting it out upon terms that they might think equitable to the labourers and the country. A great deal of that Act has since been repealed, but those sections, I believe, are still in force; and I rejoice to think that this purpose of bringing the masses of the rural population into nearer connection with the use of the land for their own interests, and not merely for their wages, is a purpose that has already received this emphatic sanction, even in times that we consider to have been comparatively dark times, and under the auspices of a Parliament far more restricted in its ideas than the Parliament which is now, as I hope, to be charged with the care of those interests.

THE LIQUOR LAWS.

That is a possible purpose to which local government may be applied, and very glad, indeed, will I be if it shall be found practicable so to adjust the practical difficulties of the case as to found an efficient measure upon that basis. But I tell you more of what local government means. Local government, in my estimation, and so I have already explained it, means the reform of the liquor law. If I have not dwelt in detail upon the subject, it is because I consider it as an essential and primary portion of the great subject of local government. It is through, and in connection with local government, as I hope, that it ought to be settled. And even that in itself, gentlemen, is a great and substantive purpose of legislation, which will make no small demand upon the time and the thought of Parliament.

GRANTS IN AID.

I will deal with a subject which is, I do not know that it is more important, but it is at any rate more voluminous in its character, and it will enable you, as I know how well and clearly you will follow me, to see what a mass of practical work is enveloped in those small and short words and that single phrase of local government. There has been going on, gentlemen for many years past a system with which in Parliament we are very familiar, but of which you perhaps have not heard so much as you ought to hear, and I trust you will hear, under the name of grants in aid. The general character and object of these grants may be described in a single sentence—they are grants which carry over to the Consolidated Fund—the general income of the country—the cost of purposes that have hitherto been met out of the produce of the rates on real property of the country. In my opinion it is impossible to devise a scheme more insane in principle or more objectionable in practice. It is objectionable in practice in the highest degree, because it tends so powerfully to relax all the principles of economy in local government; for in many cases those grants in aid have been coupled with conditions imposing upon local authorities, as the means of getting the grant in aid, an expenditure larger than the local authorities have thought necessary. So that you may say in a few words that it is a system which confers a

minimum of advantage to ratepayers at a maximum of cost to the general community. But there is another fault which I will presently exhibit to you of a much more serious character. Still, I will only say now that if you ask me whether I deny that the purposes of rates ought to be aided out of the general taxation of the country, I answer I do not deny it subject to these two conditions—first of all, that the money which is so granted should be granted in such a way as not to interfere with economy in the expenditure of the ratepayers' funds; and, secondly, and still the more that it ought to be granted in such a way as not to do gross injustice in the balance of taxation between property and labour. And the mode, gentlemen—I shall not enter into the details of it—but the mode of doing that is to hand over to the local authorities the proceeds of certain taxes judiciously selected for the purpose.

HOW THE CONSERVATIVES ADJUST THE INCIDENCE OF LOCAL TAXATION.

Now I want to show you what has been going on under the system of grants in aid. I read some time ago a speech of Lord George Hamilton, in which he entered upon this interesting question of increasing the number of landowners, and he said that the first thing to do in order to increase the number of landowners was what the Tory party had over and over again suggested, that was to adjust the incidence of local taxation. Yes, gentlemen, and I will show you in what way the Tory party has adjusted that. It has been by means of those transfers to the Consolidated Fund. Now, I do not deny, and have often stated in the House of Commons, that the old law of the country, as known by you in Scotland under the name of Means and Substance, is the proper taxable subject, for local purposes, of personal as well as real property. In England the law was the same, and it was only in the last thirty or forty years that stock-in-trade was in point of law exempted from liability to pay to poor-rate in England, and, therefore, the land, so to speak, had a great deal to say for itself in this controversy with personal property. As far as rates were concerned, the land took pretty good care of itself in every particular. I am not dealing with those now, but so far as rates were concerned the land had a good deal to say, and a good claim to make upon personal property, which ought to be made contributory to local burdens. And how have they given effect to the claim? They have given effect to it by placing it upon a fund derived from personal as well as real property. It is placing it upon a fund a very large portion of which is derived from labour, so that where property in land had a claim on movable and personal property, instead of charging that claim upon movable and personal property, they never made an effort to my knowledge, in that direction, but they have to a very large extent placed these local charges upon the Consolidated Fund, and thereby made the labour of the country contribute to what it never was intended to contribute to by law, and to what I do not hesitate to say it ought not to contribute.

LAY THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF THE MISCHIEF.

I want to convey to you in a very few and very simple figures an idea of the injustice that has been done to the labour of the country by this method of proceeding. I will not give you exact figures, but I will give you figures which will be perfectly clear, and which you will perfectly comprehend. It is computed that labour contributes to rates at the proportion of one-fifth, and that property contributes to them in the proportion of four-fifths. It is also computed that labour contributes to the Consolidated Fund in the proportion of two-fifths, and property in the proportion of three-fifths. I believe myself that with these computations—at any rate in the computation as regards the Consolidated Fund—the contribution made by labour (chiefly, of course, through indirect taxation), is understated, and, therefore, that the result I shall show you is less than the truth. Now, let me suppose that five millions of charge have been carried over from the rates to the Consolidated Fund—it does not matter whether it is the exact figure; I want to show you what the practical effect of the operation is—five millions of charge. Fix that in your mind. While that was the charge upon the rates, according to the figures I have given you, four millions of it were borne by property and one million by labour. It is carried over to the Consolidated Fund, and the effect of it is that now three-fifths go on property and two-fifths to labour—3,000,000 are borne by property, 2,000,000 by labour—so that, under the name and pretext of relieving the ratepayer, a million of taxation is annually carried over from the shoulders of property and laid upon the shoulders of labour. Now, gentlemen, my contention is that that is not an equitable—I might say not an honourable proceeding. It is not consistent with justice as between two different classes of the community; and an essential part, in my opinion, of the work of the coming Parliament will be to lay the axe to the root of the mischief, and cut it away from the earth.

THE LAND QUESTION.

I think I have said enough to show you, without entering upon full details, how much is involved in the proper and business-like handling of this great subject of local government; but I will touch one other question, and one which is larger still—I mean the question of land. We have not in the last Parliament been altogether idle upon that subject; I believe that we have tolerably redeemed all the pledges in respect of land, the substantial pledges which I gave you when I had the honour of addressing you six years ago. We have laboured upon the question of the relations between landlord and tenant. For the first time we have provided for the bulk of the tenants of this country—I do not mean Scotland only, but I mean England, also; still more would it apply to Ireland—for the bulk of the tenants of this country we have provided both security, which they did not previously enjoy, and the means of recovering the unexhausted capital that they have laid out upon the land. I do not say that the work is perfect. It may be that the peculiar conditions of the law in Scotland under the system of

hypothec have created a state of things which has not yet been in all points fully considered. I will not enter into particulars upon that subject, but I will say this, that speaking of the farmer generally in England, Scotland, and Ireland, his position has been enormously improved, and he has now come to own legal rights and to be possessed of remedies which formerly had no existence in law, and with respect to which he was entirely dependent upon the goodwill or bounty of his landlord. We did what we could for him in reference to ground game, and, so far as I know, speaking principally of England, where, I believe, that law has produced the most admirable effects, we have, gentlemen, still remaining to consider one other difficult and urgent question in connection with the cultivation of the soil, and that is the question known to you, gentlemen, under the name of the Crofter question. That subject is a difficult one, but I will say of it, in the presence of my learned friend the Dean of Faculty, that if it be his fate to conduct it, I hope he will conduct a settlement of that question which will dispose of the great social and economical difficulties with which it is now hampered and entangled.

“MUST BE SWEEP AWAY.”

But there is a great work to be done with reference to the land laws, entirely apart from the question of the relation between the owner of the land and its cultivator. Of course, one portion of that work is known to you to be that while perfect liberty of bequest with regard to land, as with regard to other things, ought to be preserved, yet the custom of primogeniture, which sets an extravagant and unsound example in cases of intestacy, that custom ought to be, and must be, swept away. There is a change, gentlemen, far more important than that, and that is to alter what is still known popularly by the name of the law of entail; but I believe I should more correctly describe it upon the whole—most intelligently describe it upon the whole—if I were to say it was to be the destruction of life interests in land. The consequence of these life interests has been manifest. I believe they have been bad economically; I believe they have been bad in their social and domestic bearings upon the peace and welfare of families, because in the case of land they take out of the parent's hand the duty of providing for the child, and they teach the child to look to the law, and not to the parent, and also to regard its inheritance as not dependent upon his good conduct, but that which he is to enjoy, however opposite to good his conduct may be. Another evil consequence of these life estates in land has been the enormous complication of the law. In a very able speech, Mr. Willis, a distinguished Queen's Counsel, endeavoured to show, and I think he did show, that it is idle to talk of free transfer of land, making it to easily pass from one to another, as long as life estates exist, as long as that complex sympathy of procedure which has been gradually built up in connection with life estates is permitted to remain. But we are agreed that what we want to get at is the absolute dealing with the transfer of land. We wish that the transfer should be as simple as the transfer of any other property; and the doctrine of Mr. Willis is

that in ancient times, and under the feudal system, in its purity, which we are too apt indiscriminately to condemn, that in ancient times was not only as simple, but was more simple than any other description of property. Then, gentlemen, there is the registration of land, so that everybody who has dealings with the owner of the land may know what is the real condition. That is a thing that at present is not merely difficult, but is absolutely impossible.

LAND MORTGAGES.

Then there is the mortgage of land. I dare say when you want to borrow money on railway shares you can, as I believe, borrow that money as a general rule by executing a transfer of the shares, and that transfer of the shares is very properly subject to a duty of ten shillings per cent.; but if you want to borrow money by mortgage you can do it by paying a duty of only two shillings and sixpence per cent. I believe, gentlemen, there never was a greater injury inflicted in the name and semblance of a boon than the imposing of the lower rate of duty on mortgaging. If you could stop the landlord from mortgaging his land you would do him a favour. There is nothing that so falsifies his position; there is nothing that so undermines his independence; there is nothing that so places him in the face of the public as a great pretender of possessing influence and power, the true basis of which he does not really possess, as this facility of mortgage, which has led many men, perhaps most of all in Ireland, and likewise in England, and I am afraid also in Scotland, to mortgage themselves over their ears and over their head, and to be no longer more than the nominal proprietors of that land upon which they continue to exist, only for the purpose of preventing somebody else to exist who might possibly do some day. There is another point upon which I wish to say a few words to you in connection with the land, because I stupidly forgot it at the time when I was writing the address I laid before you. It is the question of the land in mortmain. Here I must ask you, as you have not in Scotland a great deal of land in mortmain, to extend your sympathetic sentiments to England. In England the quantity in mortmain is large indeed. It is adopted to a very large extent for the Church, and to a large extent for the colleges, and to a large extent also for hospitals and other charitable foundations; in fact, there were millions upon millions. I am not certain that I may not say that in England—though you have little of it here—there are scores of millions of landed property held in mortmain; not held by the individual, but under the management of persons who have not a direct individual interest in it, and who, notwithstanding, exercise the whole power, influence, and responsibility connected with the management of land.

MORTMAIN.

This is not the time, in the present stagnant state of the land market, to contemplate great and rapid changes, but it is a time justly to consider the foundations of the policy; and I do not hesitate to tell you that I

believe the only sound policy for the Legislature to adopt would be to root up altogether the system of holding land in mortmain, and to have the land properly so called held by individuals with all the motives of legitimate self-interest and all its rewards brought to bear upon it, instead of placing it in the anomalous position in which it is now placed, under the management of corporate bodies. Of course, gentlemen, when I say that, you will understand I do not mean to imply that there ought not to be bodies entitled to hold pieces of land for sites for churches, for chapels, for schools, and all these things, nor will I even go so far as to say whether it is necessary to bestow any censure at all upon the glebes of the Scottish established clergy, and which, as far as I have ever had the opportunity of knowing, have been very shrewdly, carefully, and, in recent times, successfully managed. I do not speak of that, but I speak of the holding of masses of land under bodies not having that stimulus of personal self-interest to improve the land, because that personal self-interest does not mean merely that the owner of the land is to get out of it the greatest amount of benefit; but it means that the land is also to be made to yield the greatest amount of benefit for the public at large. This is a subject of very great interest in connection with the question of introducing the labourer to a share in cultivation—possibly in the ownership of the land for his own benefit, because I pointed out to you that there is a certain amount of difficulty in authorising local authorities to go among a number of proprietors to select at their own option whom they shall expropriate; but there is a great stalk of land which, when it is sold under public authority, it will be in the power of the State to acquire in large portions, and in many parts of the country there will be a most valuable and unobjectionable opportunity for selling land in such portions as will be valuable for the less wealthy classes of the population. I may mention that the experiment has been tried in Ireland; it has been tried so far with perfect success; it was tried when the Irish Church was disestablished; it has been tried again to some extent on the land; but in the case where the Irish Church was disestablished, and the State became owner for the time of a great deal of the land, nothing could be better than the manner in which the subject was managed, and nothing more satisfactory than the result of the sales which were made to those who are now small proprietors in the sister isle. Well, there is only one other point, gentlemen, that I will mention to you in connection with land, and that is in one single sentence. It is, as I have told you, and as I have implied in what I have said to you, that taxation upon land ought to be fairly and equitably readjusted. The system of transferring local burdens to the Consolidated Fund under the name of redressing inequalities between real property and personal property, has been the means of introducing a grosser and worse inequality as between property and labour, real property and labour. That inequality question must be thoroughly redressed, and the advantage that has been surreptitiously gained cannot be allowed to continue. Justice ought to be done to the labouring man in that adjustment, and he ought to be placed in a position which is agreeable both to the general principle of equity and to the ancient rules of this country with regard to the lessening of local burdens.

SUFFICIENT FOR THE DAY.

I hope what I have said has really sufficed to show—not that I think you were likely to doubt it before—that there is plenty of work provided for the coming Parliament; that not a scanty, but a very copious bill of fare will be laid before it. Now, gentlemen, if that work is to be done, you will see plainly it is not of a description that appeals to the violent passions or cupidity of any class, it is directly and honestly aimed at the general benefit of the whole mass of the people, and is compatible with perfect justice to every class. Work such as that can only be done by a party powerful in Parliament, and for that reason it is, and not for the mere miserable objects of personal ambition, or political or party contention, for that reason it is that I ask you to make the Liberal party powerful in the Parliament that is to come. With your support I have no doubt that this work can be accomplished. It may be, probably it must be, that my own share in it cannot be a very great one; it may be a very small one; but, at any rate, I hope to have some concern in the inception of this work, and whatever contribution I may be able to make to it, I will make with an earnest purpose, and with my whole heart. But, gentlemen, though these are old countries, that have long had history, that have long had fame in the history of the world, though these are ancient thrones, now consolidated in one, that have subsisted for many and many centuries, yet there is no mark of decrepitude either upon the institutions or upon the character of the country. They are full of hope, and they are full of vigour, and they are full of capacity to confer even greater benefits than they have yet conferred upon the vast and increasing multitudes who live beneath their shade. All that is wanted, gentlemen, is that we, the men, shall do our duty to those institutions, that we shall do what we can to improve them, and by improving, to preserve them. Hardly any higher honour can be conferred upon an individual than to be selected from among his fellow-citizens to contribute his share towards guiding the destinies of a great and free nation; hardly any duty can be more sacred and more solemn than that which you next week are about to perform, and which your fellow-countrymen throughout the land are about to perform within the few days that are before us—viz., the duty of selecting the persons who are to perform the work of the country, and upon whose good or bad performance of the work will it depend whether you lighten or whether you are to aggravate the burdens of life for yourselves and for your children through many generations yet to come.

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